



MASTER HUNTER

K

BOOK 01

From Hell

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Master Hunter K

(마스터헌터K)

by

From Hell

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Synopsis

Without warning, every man, woman, and child were teleported off to fight an endless series of battle 'to prove the worth of their species with their own power.'

Failure to clear every objective means that humanity shall be purged, or so the Operator claims.

But if that is true, why was K sent back in time?

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Prologue

“No...”

Sungjin reached out towards the heaven, but strength had already left him. Somewhere, the ‘Operator’s’ voice filled the air.

[All players Eliminated. Closing the Chapter.]

Sight dimmed from Sungjin’s eyes, darkness creeping inward from the edge of his vision. Now that he faced imminent death, he finally found peace.

“I had enough of violence. I’m glad it is finally over.”

He let the calm settle over him. Sungjin welcomed the approaching darkness, of his death. But the Operator’s voice continued to reverberate in the background.

[You have died.]

[You were humanity’s very last remaining Player.]

[Benefit awarded to the last player to die is “Restart”]

At the same time, a single line of text appears before his eyes.

Restart – Redo the hunt from the very beginning, but with current memory.

‘What?’

Before Sungjin could mutter another sentence, he opened his eyes and saw that he was now in an entirely white room. It was a familiar room, with perfectly square walls.

[Hunt will soon begin. Prepare for battle.]

“Restart... from scratch?”

Sungjin lifted his arms. They felt empty. He examined his hands.

‘My rings are gone!’

It wasn’t just the rings, all the items he had been gathering until now were missing. He had been brought back moments before the first hunt. To the same room where everything began.

“Sigh...”

Sungjin massaged his forehead as he let out a withering sigh. In front of his eyes, a large bulletin board appeared.

Time Limit: 30 Seconds

At the same time, he heard a voice.

[Annihilate the enemy. If you cannot]

Sungjin absentmindedly spoke out the next words along with the operator.

“You will die.”

[You will die.]

Volume 01

Chapter 000 - Living Mannequin

One day, a mechanical but distinctly feminine voice was heard by all humans. This is the voice who later introduces herself as the “Operator”.

[A hunt will soon begin. Prepare for combat.]

And the moment they heard the sentence, every man, woman, and child were teleported to a blank white room alone. The room itself was not large; just slightly over 66 m³. And in the middle, a large hologram appeared.

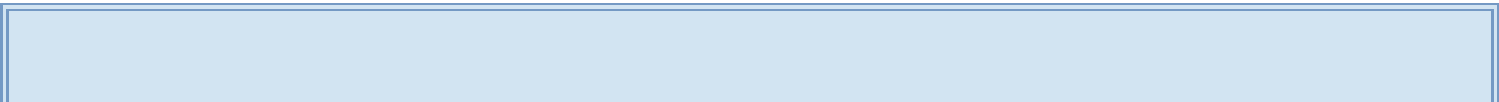
Chapter 0 – Living Mannequin
Time Limit: 30 Seconds

A simple information about the enemy appeared, and then

[Annihilate the enemy. If you cannot, you will die.]

A simple ‘rule’ is explained.

[For the first Chapter, just this once, you will be provided with a weapon. Select your weapon.]



[Club], [Broad Sword], [Katana], [Hand Axe], [Long Spear],
[Long bow and Short Sword], [Spiked Gauntlets]

When Sungjin saw this, he said out loud,

“...Katana.”

And in the next instant, a katana appeared in his hands. It was a Japanese curved single edged sword. Inspecting the weapon, he whispered to himself.

“Wow, it’s been a long time since I last saw this.”

Once the weapon was selected, the operator began a countdown.

[10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0]

After 10 seconds, the billboard disappeared, and the ‘enemy’ described in it was summoned. Chapter 0, Living Mannequin. An eerie doll hung on a cross-shaped wooden stand.

As promised, it was a living Mannequin. It stood there unmoving. Sungjin left the Mannequin alone and gazed at his weapon.

“I have to do this... all over again...?”

Sungjin's memories flashed before his eyes. Never ending series of battles, constant pressure to kill, and a steady stream of the death of irreplaceable comrades. While Sungjin was preoccupied with his thoughts, the Operator continued to speak.

[20 seconds remaining. Annihilate the enemy. If you cannot, you will die.]

Rows upon rows of sharp steel spikes appeared from the ceiling.

“I can't do this anymore...”

Sungjin hung his head, shaking it as he stood there. The Operator spoke again.

[10 seconds remaining. Annihilate the enemy. If you cannot, you will die.]

The ceiling, which was now covered in spikes, began coming down. There was no place to hide and nowhere to run. The operator began countdown once more.

[10, 9, 8, 7...]

The ceiling was now low enough to touch by jumping up, but Sungjin did not move. He watched the ceiling approach closer and closer, and thought to himself.

‘This is it? Is this the reward for being the last human to die? I’d rather...’

[6, 5, 4]

But before he finished his thoughts, he recalled a promise he made with someone.

“Swear to me! You must...”

[3, 2]

Sungjin frowned. And then

[1]

He swung the katana he held.

‘Shing’

The blade cut through the air and drew a red line on the neck of the mannequin.

[o You have...]

The moment the Katana cut the mannequin’s neck, the Operator’s voice became garbled as if bugged. The ceiling also

stopped in its tracks. In a happier tone than earlier, she announced:

[All monsters eliminated. Closing the chapter.]

Following the announcement, a hologram appeared.

Completion Reward: Status Point 0

Kill Reward: Black Coin 0

Sungjin spoke to himself when he saw the message.

“Yeah... maybe, this time, it will be different.”

Once Sungjin was finished, he was summoned somewhere else.

*

The place he was summoned to was an enormous hall of an unknown size. And within it was an uncountable number of people.

Regardless of race, all ethnicities were present in the hall. The only interesting fact was that an overwhelming majority were ‘adult men’. The people who were summoned looked panicked and confused.

“What’s going on?”

“Where am I?”

“What is this?”

Sungjin watched with his arms folded over his chest. He reacted the same way as those people the first time he was here.

“Is this some sort of a reality tv show?”

“Alien abduction?”

And then, people realized that they could understand one another.

“You know how to speak Chinese?”

“How did you learn Arabic?”

“Hey, are you aware you are all speaking English?”

And the Operator’s voice was heard once more, interrupting everyone’s thoughts.

[Welcome!]

This time, the voice wasn't coming from inside their head, but coming from above. People naturally gazed upward to see who was speaking.

Above, a beautiful woman's face appeared.

[My name is Operator. I am here to welcome you all for becoming representatives of mankind.]

Sungjin smirked when he heard her words.

‘Welcome... what a farce.’

Regardless of what Sungjin thought, the Operator continued to speak.

[This place is called ‘The Hunter’s Hall’. It is where the hopes and dreams of hunters are gathered.] (See notes)

[You are all here as a result of completing the Chapter 0]

[And thereby earning the right to become hunters who will represent all of humanity.]

The reaction from the audience was varied.

“Hunter? What does she mean?”

“Is she talking about that... that thing I just killed?”

“Did you kill that too?”

“Yes. I suppose you saw the same thing?”

Chapter 0 is something akin to a tutorial. Faced with the threat of imminent death, are you able to land the killing blow on the mannequin?

Naturally, elderly, children, and disabled are unable to pass. That's not all.

“It was much harder than I thought. It kept on screaming so loudly...”

“Yours as well?”

Living Mannequins scream for their life once attacked. Because of this creepy life-like behavior, those with difficulty in taking a life are also eliminated from Chapter 0.

Physically weaker women, and also a small portion of men are part of this group. Someone comments in hindsight.

“I should have stabbed its heart first.”

[Definition of Hunter:]

[Strongest representative of the entire species, living proof of the species' strength.]

With that said, the image of the Operator changes with that of another location. The image is filled with countless women, children, and elderly.

[This place is the Purgatory. Neither heaven nor hell.]

[Gathered here are all the people eliminated from Chapter 0.]

This is only a guess, but the image on the screen was probably different for every person because people started screaming and shouting once seeing the screen.

“Mother!”

“My love... why are you...”

“My Daughter! Give me back my daughter!”

The Operator was showing everyone the people most important to them.

‘Sick bastards...’

Sungjin swore under his breath, but he didn't become upset like

the others. He was an orphan. The only ‘close’ people he knew were several employees at the orphanage he grew up at, but he didn’t feel emotionally connected to them or their fate.

[Hunters who perish during the hunt will also be moved to the purgatory.]

[If someone completes all objectives and clears the challenges]

[Everyone contained in the purgatory will be returned alive. However,]

[If all hunters fail and are moved to the purgatory]

[All of humanity will be purged.]

Sungjin doubted those words.

‘Purged? If that’s the case, then why send me back?’

Others continued to stare blankly as the Operator continued her explanation. They have yet to understand the gravity of her words.

[Prove your power by overcoming any and all obstacle that stands in your way.]

[And with your own strength, prove the worth of your species.]

[If you fail to do so, Humanity as a specie will be made extinct.]

Whispers among the crowd grew.

“What? Extinct?”

“Us? All of humanity?”

Some were expressing anger.

“Who is this bitch?”

But the Operator’s indifferent tone of voice remained unchanged by the people’s reactions.

[Now, the explanations are over.]

[I pray that we will meet again.]

The hall is now completely inundated with insults and expletives.

“You fucking whore!”

“What the fuck did you say?”

“Mother fucker!”

“Fuck!”

Despite the abuse pouring out from the audience, the Operator continued her indifferent speech.

[Hunting will begin shortly. Prepare for battle.]

Despite the deafening roar of insults being thrown at the Operator, Sungjin kept his calm and planned his next move.

‘If things are the same as before...’

Sungjin bit his lip and lifted his katana up to inspect the sword. The blade reflected his gaze back.

Looking into the eyes reflected on the blade, he vowed to himself.

‘This time, I will perfectly clear every chapter.’

Sungjin fixed his grip on the Katana and prepared himself. Moments later, he was teleported away from the Hunter’s Hall.

Translator’s Note:

The part about “hopes and dreams of _____ are gathered” is reference to Magical girl anime, like Sailor moon. It is a very hopeful and lighthearted way to say that the place is special, which is funny because this place is where people come to kill or face extinction.

Chapter 001 - Greenskin Wildlands (1)

A palisade could be seen in the distance, pierced all over with unnecessary spikes and nails. The tips were also filed to a point.

The meat of an unknown animal was hung over a bonfire to cook, and various sizes of skulls were placed on top of the spears to decorate the area.

The place Sungjin arrived to reeked of barbarity. And so he thought to himself,

‘The Chapter order is the same.’

Shortly after arriving, a cube appeared and followed him. The Operator’s voice could be heard from the cube.

[Welcome to Greenskin Wildlands;]

[Home of savage creatures who gathered together to form a tribe.]

[This is the hunter’s first real challenge]

[and it is also an excellent opportunity for the hunter to experiment with how to grow stronger.]

[The first four Phases are combat tutorials designed to get you prepared.]

[However, do not lower your guard.]

[Like in real combat situation, if you take fatal damage,]

[or if the enemy is not annihilated within the time limit, the

hunter will be killed.]

A billboard appeared with the enemy's information on it.

Phase 1 – Goblin

Time Limit: 3 Minutes

[Annihilate the enemy. If you cannot, you will die.]

“Kyakakakakaka~!”

A Goblin's cries could be heard from somewhere in the Wildlands. Sungjin drew out his katana while the Operator continued to explain through the cube.

[Goblins are small creatures.]

[Typically reaching only the height of an adult's knee, or in exceptional cases, to the hips.]

[The weight of the monster is only about a fourth of an average adult, so it is not a physically powerful creature.]

[The short height causes their point of attack to be lower, and their temperament...]

The Operator's voice stopped there since all the Goblins were already decapitated.

[All Monsters Eliminated. Closing the Chapter.]

Following the announcement, the hologram reappeared.

Completion Reward: Stat Point 1

Kill Reward: Black Coin 1

[Use the reward you earned to strengthen yourself. With only the strength of a human...]

“Enough.”

Sungjin cut off the operator and spoke over her.

“Add the Stat point to Dexterity.”

[Dexterity rose by 1 point.]

Despite Sungjin’s rude interruption, the Operator continued her explanation.

[The Black Coins can be used...]

Once again Sungjin cut her off.

“I’m not buying.”

And then once again, a billboard with the monster’s information appeared in front of him.

Phase 2 – HobGoblin

Time limit: 3 minutes

[HobGoblins are stronger versions of go...]

Sungjin did not wait for her explanation before rushing in to behead the HobGoblins. The Operator seemed to take notice of Sungjin’s competency, and so she quickly allowed him to proceed.

[All Monsters Eliminated. Closing the Chapter.]

Completion Reward: Stat Point 3

Kill Reward: Black Coin 3

Sungjin spoke to the cube.

“All Stat points to Dexterity. And I’m not buying anything.”

[Dexterity rose by 3 points.]

Operator skipped all the explanations and proceeded to the next phase.

Phase 3 – Orc

Time Limit: 3 Minutes

This time, Sungjin didn't rush out of the entry way. The Operator gave an explanation from behind.

[Orcs are powerful creatures.]

[They are as large or larger than an average adult male human.]

[They also wield barbaric weapons such as clubs, glaives, and axes.]

An Orc jumped out from behind the Palisade. He sported a clearly defined six pack and well-developed trapezius muscle.

This Phase was where most of the physically weaker hunters were eliminated and sent to the purgatory.

‘I remember this being really hard the first time.’

Recalling memories of the previous time he was in this Chapter, Sungjin could not help but laugh. This time around things will be

different, he thought. Sungjin had already experienced countless battles before; something as simple as an Orc did not warrant a second thought.

“Uzak Rumrum”

The Orc shouted in an unknown language and charged towards Sungjin. He aimed for Sungjin’s head and swung his club. Sungjin avoided the blow by leaning back out of the strike zone.

“Woosh”

Club hit nothing but air.

“Bam!”

And landed on the ground. The Orc stiffened up slightly upon impact. Taking advantage of his opening, Sungjin cut the back of the Orc’s knee.

“Kaaaa!”

The Orc was forced to his knees, exposing his neck to Sungjin. Without mercy, Sungjin brought his blade down upon the Orc’s neck.

The Orc was beheaded in a single strike. Moments later, the Operator spoke.

[All Monsters Eliminated. Closing the Chapter.]

Sungjin raised his katana high and swung the sword, causing the blood on the katana to fall and paint a crimson tapestry on the forest floor.

Sungjin absentmindedly cleaned off his blade as he thought to himself while examining the head of the Orc.

‘Now that I think of it, the last Orc was bald.’

The Orc head in front of him sported long hair.

‘The Chapter itself is the same... but the monsters are a little different. I’m going to have to keep this in mind.’

Interrupting his thoughts, the Operator announced his reward.

Completion Reward: Stat Point 5

Kill Reward: Black Coin 5

Sungjin, once again, put all his stat points into Dexterity.

“All Stat points to Dexterity.”

[Dexterity rose by 5 points.]

“And I’m not...”

Sungjin stopped himself before finishing saying “buying anything” as before. The next enemy was a Troll, an adversary with an amazing regenerative ability.

In order to kill a Troll in spite of his regenerative ability, fire or acid was required. The Operator also suggested the same.

[You will require fire to fight the next enemy.]

[In the first Chapter, you will be able to purchase Items from the cube.]

[Please use the Black Coins you earned to purcha...]

Sungjin cut off the Operator and spoke over her.

“How much is the Salamander’s ash?”

[It is 6 Black Coins.]

Salamander’s ash is an item that gives fire enchant to a weapon upon use. The problem is that it is a consumable item that wears off over time.

It was an item necessary for new hunters to overcome the early Chapters, but for Sungjin who aimed for ‘All Clear’ and late game, it was an expense he was hesitant to make. Sungjin asked the Operator;

“How much is Moyzakui Flintstone?”

[It is 300 Black Coins.]

Unlike Salamander’s ash, Moyzakui Flintstone could repeatedly be used. However, it costs 300 Black Coins. He would need to complete two Chapters before he could earn that much.

Sungjin frowned and said to the operator:

“...Not buying.”

Third time. The Operator prepared the next phase immediately upon hearing Sungjin’s answer.

Phase 4 – Troll

Time limit: 3 minutes

A monster at least a head taller than an average man appeared from the palisade. When the Troll noticed Sungjin, it opened its jaws wide and roared.

“Guwaaaaarg!”

From the force of its roar, long strings of mucus dripped down its jaw, clinging to its irregular and jagged teeth. Sungjin assumed his position and drew his katana. And for the first time since returning to the beginning, Sungjin checked the timer.

‘...3 Minutes’

Translator’s notes

Unnecessary Spikes – Reference to WoW Horde

Chapter 002 - Greenskin Wildlands (2)

The Troll waved his club wildly as he ran towards Sungjin. Sungjin watched the club carefully and dodged

“Woosh”

Twice

“Whoosh”

He evaded the club and cut the back of the Troll’s knee like in the case of the Orc.

“Kurag!”

The Troll fell on his knees. Sungjin tried to cut off the Troll’s head as he did with the Orc, but

“Woosh”

The Troll swung his club towards Sungjin again. Sungjin was forced to stop as he dodged the club and backed away creating a distance between them. The Troll stood up right away, and charged towards Sungjin.

“Warrgh!”

The cut on his leg had regenerated by the time it finished screaming. If he had used ‘Salamander’s ash’, the fight would have already been over, but Sungjin wished to preserve every bit of Black Coin he could manage.

‘I guess the same trick won’t work on a Troll.’

A Troll's physical strength was massive, and with an extraordinary regenerative ability, it was impossible for a human to face off against it using purely physical attacks.

But the reason why humans could overcome the Trolls is that the Trolls lacked the ability to learn.

“Graaah!”

The Troll picked up his club and charged towards Sungjin once more. Sungjin dodged the club and

“Woosh”

Sungjin cut the Troll's shin and spun around, striking and severing the wrist with which the Troll held the club.

“Kragh!”

While screaming in pain of losing his right hand, the Troll swung his fist towards Sungjin with his left hand.

Sungjin jumped back to avoid that strike. The tip of the Troll's fingers sported nails as sharp as spears.

‘I can't give him a chance to regenerate.’

Once Sungjin landed on the ground, he dashed forward to re-engage the Troll. The Troll swiped his left hand once more towards Sungjin, but Sungjin swiftly dodged and closed in on the Troll.

And all he had to do was to draw out his katana and hold it in the trajectory of the slash. The Troll's massive strike met the blade, and the momentum of the Troll's own attack severed his wrist effortlessly.

“Wargh!”

Sungjin got to work cutting and slashing ruthlessly at the Troll without mercy. It was a gruesome task, but Sungjin could not let up the pressure since the Troll could regenerate all of it in a matter of moments.

With both hands gone, the Troll could not retaliate against Sungjin's attacks and finally leaned forward to protect his body. The moment the Troll leaned over, Sungjin beheaded the Troll.

And without a pause, the Operator announced his victory.

[All Monsters Eliminated. Closing the Chapter.]

“Haa...”

Finally, Sungjin let out a sigh.

“Fighting Troll without fire... how annoying.”

The fallen Troll had already regrown his right arm, along with the spear-like nails. It was an unbelievable display of regenerative ability.

But despite it all, it was a success. He had saved 6 Black Coins. The Operator announced the reward.

Completion Reward: Stat Point 10

Kill Reward: Black Coin 10

The reward for the Troll was double that of the Orc, which made sense. Actually, considering the difference in the level of difficulty between the two monsters, the difference in the reward amount was perhaps not high enough; in real combat, the Troll was more than twice as difficult as compared to the Orc.

If the Orc was an opponent a grown man has a good chance of defeating, then the Troll was something only a combat veteran could overcome; assuming he used the Black Coins in both cases.

‘I think an unimaginable amount of people will be eliminated at this stage.’

Sungjin's guess was spot on as many had succumbed to their deaths on this phase and were sent to the purgatory. That may be, but there was no need to mourn the loss of those hunters. In this "hunt", only the strong were allowed to survive.

In fact, the earlier the weak got eliminated, the better. Especially before the next round. The next round was not an individual round; it was a 'Raid' conducted as a team. The Operator announced this fact as well.

[Dear Hunter, you have completed this phase faster than the others.]

[In the next phase, you will be put into teams with other hunters and carry out a "Raid".]

[Please stand by until other hunters complete their tutorials.]

Since Sungjin suddenly had down time, he checked his Status for the first time since the restart.

"Operator, show me my Stats."

HP: 100 MP: 170

Strength: 12

Dexterity: 23

Endurance: 10

Magic: 14

Concentration (AKA Mind): 17

Unallocated Stat points: 10

Seeing the Status window made Sungjin pause.

‘The Stat is the same as last time.’

From the start, Sungjin’s Stat was on the high side. Before he restarted from beginning, he had asked others for their starting States and found that most people had averaged just around 10. Meaning Sungjin was originally much stronger than an average person.

His strength and dexterity were 2~3 points higher than average. And although it was unclear how it was decided, he also had higher than average starting Magic power and Mind Power (mana). Only his endurance was at an average level.

Sungjin carefully thought about his Stat.

‘I began raising Dexterity which directly improved my speed, but...’

He lifted up his katana and asked the Operator a question.

“Operator, show me the specs of the sword.”

Katana – Beginning the Hunt

Normal Katana – Strength C Dexterity D

Basic weapon issued by the Operator without any significant merits or demerits.

If wielded by a master, it can perform extraordinarily well.

‘Strength C Dexterity D...’

In this “hunt”, every weapon had a rating for how it affects Strength and Dexterity. Until the restart, Sungjin had used weapons rated at at least an A. He asked Operator another question.

“Operator, how do ranks affect bonus stats?”

[Rank affects stats as follows.]

[Rank E – x0.1 | Rank D – x0.2 | Rank C – x0.5]

[Rank B – x1.0 | Rank A – x1.5 | Rank S – x2.0]

[Rank SS – x3.0 | Rank SSS – x4.0]

Generally speaking, blunts and axes are more influenced by Strength and less from Dexterity. Swords, like the katana wielded by Sungjin, were well balanced between Strength and Dexterity.

If he raises his strength, the damage will increase by a large amount (in this case, by an additional $\times 0.5$), and raising the dexterity will increase damage by a smaller ($\times 0.2$) amount. He would be trading damage for attack and dodging speed in combat.

Raising both stats had merits, but Sungjin decided to build on dexterity first. Increasing his speed improved his ability to dodge. Instead of investing in Endurance, he opted for combat stats.

Not raising his endurance at all was a dangerous gamble. No matter how fast he was, he could still die from one or two stray hits without investing points in endurance.

But he paid no heed to the danger and decided to all-in on his gamble.

“Add all points to Dexterity.”

[Dexterity rose by 10 points.]

Starting with the next phase, which was a raid, points were awarded based on his merit and participation.

‘If I don’t excel from the start, I will die in the latter half.’

Sungjin’s immediate goal wasn’t merely survival, but to prepare for end game. So ignoring Endurance, for now, he invested solely in Dexterity. And he decided to save every Black Coin he could manage.

The average hunter would have difficulty surviving from chapter to chapter without items. But Sungjin decided that he was not going to waste any coins on consumables if at all possible.

[Synchronization will begin in 1 minute.]

The Operator fell silent after that last message. It appeared that there was still some time before other hunters completed their phases. Sungjin crossed his arms and thought about the next raid.

‘Killing as many monsters as possible within the time limit is a no-brainer...’

It was the most basic rule, common to all raids.

‘And if at all possible, find the hidden boss and eliminate it.’

Hidden boss refers to boss mobs concealed in every map. As chapters progressed, hunters realized that hidden boss mobs and items existed in every map. And those secret bosses dropped ‘special items.’

‘Problem is, I do not know where it is located.’

Sungjin knew the location of a few hidden bosses in later chapters, thanks to hunters sharing the secret locations via word of mouth.

But for the first raid, ‘Greenskin Wildlands’, nobody knew the secret location, because everyone was still new to the hunt.

‘In that case, I need to complete the raid as fast as possible and search the map.’

Running through the plan in his head, Sungjin pursed his lips and nodded. Finally, the Operator announced the next stage.

[All hunts have been completed.]

[Synchronizing Hunters]

The background blurred for a moment, and four people appeared in the vicinity. Including Sungjin, there were five hunters now.

“What?”

The other hunters were briefly shocked upon seeing each other, but

[Starting from phase 5, the hunt will be carried out as a ‘raid’ in cooperation between 5 hunters.]

The moment the Operator’s voice was heard, the other hunters immediately stopped speaking. They had realized that listening to the Operator was essential to their survival.

Phase 5 – Greenskin Wildlands Raid

Target – Hunt the Orc Chief Kamul

Time limit: 20 minutes

[Complete your objective within the time limit.]

[If you cannot, you will die.]

The others listened carefully to the Operator's announcement. Meanwhile, Sungjin took the chance to inspect his teammates.

They were all males. Black, White, Asian, Arabic, they were all from different races, and not one of them Sungjin recognized. The teammates were different than in his previous life.

‘I kind of predicted this back when I saw the Orc...’

Sungjin had briefly hoped that he would find the same members in his team from last time, but he knew better than to expect it. The Operator was explaining about the rewards of this raid.

[You will be given freedom to act as you please upon completion of the raid objective.]

[Hunt as many enemies as you can within the time limit.]

[The more you hunt, higher the reward will be.]

[Loot will be distributed based on contribution.]

Goblin – Contribution 1

HobGoblin – Contribution 3

Orc – Contribution 5

Troll – Contribution 10

Orc Chief ‘Cunning Kamul’ – Contribution 50

As expected, there was no information at all about the hidden boss. The Operator only went on to explain the importance of cooperation.

[In order to complete the raid objective, Cooperation between hunters is essential.]

[Please discuss with your teammates, distribute your Stat points, and purchase items as you deem necessary.]

[Raid begins in 1 minute. I wish you all best of luck.]

With that last sentence, the Operator concluded her explanation. The only thing left now were the five hunters. Since this was the first meeting amongst them, it was a little awkward. But finally, someone broke the ice.

“Well, since we should cooperate with each other, let’s introduce ourselves.”

First to speak out was the muscular Black man.

“As you saw from the previous round, we need fire to beat those Trolls. How many Black Coins do you all have remaining with you? I have 7 left.”

The black man wore a vest with “Police” written on it, with a large badge. At his words, others began to speak out. This time, the tall white man.

“8...”

Then the short and skinny Asian.

“I have 6.”

And finally, the Arabic man wearing a turban.

“I also have 6.”

As expected, they all had spent some coins until now. Potions to heal from the damage taken from fighting and the Salamander’s ash which was needed to defeat the Troll.

But if they continued to burn through coins purchasing consumable items like this, they wouldn’t last until the end game. Everybody had announced their number of Black Coins.

Everybody except one. They looked towards Sungjin. Finally opening his mouth, he decided to speak.

“...Please listen carefully.”

Chapter 003 - Greenskin Wildlands (3)

Everyone's eyes focused on Sungjin. With his eyes narrowed to a slit, Sungjin continued to speak.

“You should all follow closely behind me. I will clear this raid quickly for you.”

Sungjin's plan was simple. Finish the raid as fast as possible and then search for the hidden boss.

After all, his objective wasn't to simply clear the raid. Without waiting for anyone to reply, Sungjin continued to explain.

“And just in case, please go ahead and purchase Salamander's ash. You don't need potions so don't get them.”

The team continued to stare at Sungjin in shock. He added one more line.

“And as the last bit of advice, if you have any remaining unallocated Stat points, please invest them into Endurance. Then, you will be able to survive at least a bit longer.”

Once Sungjin finished, the other four men looked amongst each other. Finally, the white man spoke out first.

“I mean, we don't know what's going to happen soon...”

The Arab man joined in,

“He’s right. We should carefully consider our options, don’t you think?”

Sungjin bit his lips in frustration. But he didn’t have the time nor reason to explain everything to them. And the operator decided this was the best timing to ask Sungjin a question.

[You currently have 19 Black Coins left. Will you...]

“I’m not buying.”

Sungjin answered nonchalantly, but the other four men opened their eyes wide in surprise. The Black man repeated the number to verify.

“19?”

The White man also asked in response.

“You didn’t use a single coin until now?”

The two men looked upon Sungjin with a sense of admiration, but the other two looked horrified. The Asian man narrowed his eyes, full of distrust, and asked Sungjin,

“19? You’ve got so many, and you are making us spend our own coins instead?”

The Arab man piped in as well.

“19... If you have several more times the coins than anyone of us do, doesn’t it make more sense for you to spend your coins?”

Sungjin massaged his forehead. He was starting to give up on the idea of trying to explain himself.

“...I am unable to spend my coins.”

The other four men doubted his words. Especially the Asian man.

“Liar! You’re just trying to save up coins to buy yourself lots of potions! So you can survive alone!”

The Arab man also butted in.

“Right, to save yourself!”

Sungjin shook his head.

“You don’t need to help me. Just... stick together as a group and carefully hunt Goblins on the outskirts of the wildlands.”

However, the Asian man pointed his finger towards Sungjin and continued to accuse him of trickery.

“What is your problem? Who do you think you are? Who are you to try and teach the rest of us? You’re just a teenager!”

Sungjin now started frowning. He expected it to be difficult to explain himself, but it still felt annoying to be openly antagonized. The Operator interrupted the situation.

[30 seconds until raid begins.]

“Ok, let’s stop fighting here. Let’s all cooperate. We still have 30 seconds. I shall buy one Salamander’s ash to start.”

The Black man tried to recover the mood, but it was already beyond salvaging. The Arab man spoke to the cube.

“Operator, use 6 coins and buy me two recovery potions.”

The Asian man immediately followed suit.

“Operator, give me two recovery potions as well.”

Both men spent all of their remaining coins to buy potions. The white man began to get angry watching the two men.

“What are you doing? What are you trying to do?”

The Asian man pointed his fingers at Sungjin.

“You don’t need to spend coins for items. He can just buy it for us if we need it.”

The Arab man and Asian man continued to work together to blame Sungjin.

“Yeah, who is he to be giving us orders?”

The Black police officer who had been trying to rally the group also started massaging his forehead. Sungjin stared at the four men with narrowed eyes.

‘If this were under normal circumstances, this group would face elimination.’

The first group Sungjin got into had worked together to overcome the raid together. It was difficult, but as a result of cooperation, Sungjin was able to survive to the end becoming the last remaining survivor. Groups like this, where members all argued and sought personal gain over the best interest of the group were almost guaranteed to be eliminated.

[10 Seconds until raid begins.]

Sungjin stood up from the rock he sat on and strolled to the entrance of the raid.

“Hey, wait a minute...”

The Black Police officer tried to stop Sungjin, but Sungjin ignored him and waited at the entrance. Soon the Operator began a countdown.

[5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Raid Commencing.]

The moment the raid began, Sungjin dashed out towards the Wildlands.

*

After Sungjin had left, the four men didn't take a single step forward.

“Who's going to stand vanguard?”

“The weapon I picked is a spear... so I will be in the back.”

“What? What are you talking about? You can stand at the front and use the range to keep enemies at bay!”

“Are you mad? It's obviously better to support from the back!”

The two who were arguing turn their sights on the Black Police officer.

“You... You’re a police officer. You should stand vanguard.”

‘Protection of civilians’ was now a meaningless phrase. But the other men still looked up to him and trusted him to protect them. The Black police officer had no choice but to tighten his grip on the club (the most similar weapon to police baton that he was used to) and stood at the front.

“Let’s...uh, try to lure one or two in at a time and avoid being outnumbered.”

He carefully stepped into the wildlands. But once he was there, he couldn’t help but be shocked.

“What’s all this?”

In front of his eyes were a mountain of green-skinned corpses. The others also expressed their surprise.

“How is this possible?”

“Did that teenager do this all by himself?”

Just a glance was enough to see that there were more than a

dozen monsters slain in front of them. The others had been going from Phase to Phase, barely winning one on one, barely holding onto their lives. The Arab man asked.

“What should we do now?”

The Black policeman in the front recalled Sungjin’s words.

‘You should all follow closely behind me. I will clear this raid quickly for you.’

The officer turned around to face the other men.

“Let’s follow the corpses. If we keep going, eventually we should catch up to him.”

Following the corpses, the men slowly inched their way in cautiously. Suddenly, the cube lets out a warning.

[Caution: Boss monster]

[Orc Chief ‘Cunning Kamul’ has appeared!]

Simultaneously, a powerful roar could be heard from straight ahead.

“Kurruagh!”

The Black man pointed forward.

“Let’s go quickly!”

But the other three were wary.

“Do we... even have to go?”

“Yeah, let’s just let them be.”

The Black Police officer shook his head in disappointment and ran towards the direction from where the roar was heard. Ahead, he saw numerous green skinned enemies, from Orcs to Trolls. But standing at the center was an Orc 1.5 times taller than all the other Orcs.

One could see in a single glance that it was none other than the Boss mob. The Boss held a massive, fearsome club embedded from tip to tip with skulls.

“What... in the world?”

Beholding the boss mob for the first time, even the brave police officer stopped in his tracks. But the teenager charged forward fearlessly.

Goblins, HobGoblins, and Orcs attempted to obstruct him, but they were cut down mercilessly. Each swing of his sword sent

heads flying.

Two Trolls attacked him simultaneously, but the teenager dodged lightly, and took off an arm of one and removed the legs from both Trolls.

The Trolls who lost their legs struggled on the ground. Ignoring the Trolls who lost their mobility, the teenager rushed towards the Orc Chief.

“Kragh!”

The Orc Chief let out a fearsome roar and swung his club. The speed of his attack was unbelievable considering the Orc Chief’s size. But the teenager was faster. He dodged the club as if he predicted the path and timing.

Then, he counter-attacked and attacked the chief’s hands. Few fingers holding the club flew off.

“Wagh!”

The Chief cried out in pain. But no ounce of mercy could be seen in the Teenager’s attack. With lightening speed tempo, he cut the Chief’s shin, chest, and shoulders in quick succession.

The chief bit back his pain and tried to swing his club once more, but it was nowhere near as fast. The teenager easily dodged the attack and cut the chief’s throat. Blood spilled from the neck like a

waterfall.

“Kack...ack...ack..”

The Chief couldn't even scream out properly anymore, and after coughing up blood a few more times, he kneeled over and stopped moving. The Operator announced happily,

[Objective complete. You will be summoned back to the Hunter's Hall in 11 minutes and 32 seconds.]

The Black police officer couldn't help but exclaim

“Incredible...!”

The teenager, however, had no time to rest. The Trolls had regenerated by now and began attacking the teen again. They were no match for the teen before; they were no match for the teen now. The teenager rapidly ripped apart the Trolls. It was evident that given time, the teenager would reduce them to pieces of meat and kill them. But they were interrupted.

“Help! Save us!”

The police officer heard screams of terror from behind. Two Trolls were chasing the three men he had left behind.

“What the...”

There was no time for the officer to say anything. He saw the white turban of the Arab gripped by one of the Troll's hands. The Black man had no choice but to run as well.

The three men ran into the hall where Sungjin was already fighting two Trolls. Sungjin turned and saw the three men run in, and the additional two Trolls that followed. The trio raced to the other side of the hall as if to hide behind Sungjin. The two new Trolls swung their clubs at Sungjin.

“Woosh”

The club split the air, and the Black man closed his eye on instinct. And when he opened his eyes, each of the Trolls had lost an arm each.

“Grrrrrrr”

The problem was the original two Trolls. Because of the new Trolls, the first two Trolls had an opportunity to regenerate. Sungjin, who kept an indifferent expression until now, let out his first words of frustration.

“Damn it, I don't have time for this...”

The Black police officer realized something from his utterance. Judging from his skill, Sungjin would win against all four Trolls hands down. But it would take considerable time since the four

Trolls would take turn regenerating.

The Black man reached into his pocket and retrieved a package. It was the Salamander's ash he was forced to purchase. He scattered the ash on his club and spread it evenly on the club with his hands.

‘Foof’

His club lit up in flames. He got up close to Sungjin and said to him.

“Please immobilize them. I will finish them off.”

Sungjin rapidly cut the Trolls. One moment, their arms would be cut off at the elbows, and the next, the tendon below their knees. The Trolls who lost their arms and legs fell to the floor and flailed.

The Black police officer took his flaming club and struck the Trolls in their knees. The fire burnt the wound Black and prevented further regeneration. Within moments, the Trolls were killed off.

Once killing all the Trolls, Sungjin wasted no time asking the cube,

“...Operator, time remaining on the clock?”

[You will return to the Hunter's Hall in 10 minutes 7 seconds.]

He had already wasted more than 1 minute. He had to find and kill the hidden boss in that time.

Chapter 004 - Greenskin Wildlands (4)

Sungjin took a glance around at the surroundings, still holding his bloody katana. Nothing stood out at the Boss's hall. It was also improbable that both the boss and the hidden boss were placed in the same location.

Sungjin moved to leave the hall but saw the Black police officer. He turned towards him and asked,

“Hey, what's your name?”

“Baltren. Gerald Baltren.”

“Good. Listen to me, Baltren. Take the other two and try to search around here. With you three, and with that flaming club, you should be able to handle anything, including a lone Troll. Do you understand?”

The Black police officer nodded quickly.

“And if you find anything out of place, let me know. A hidden location, or a strange looking monster.”

“But... how will we contact you when you're far away?”

“You can speak with the Operator's cube and request to communicate with the team members. It functions like a police

walkie-talkie. Any other questions?”

“No, I got it.”

Baltren took his club and turned around.

“You heard him, right? Let’s work together.”

Sungjin began to walk out once more when the Asian man tried to ask him a question.

“Hey, how did you find out there are secrets to search for?”

He was shouting and antagonizing Sungjin until just a few minutes ago, Sungjin felt no need to acknowledge that a question was asked.

Once Sungjin left, Baltren took the men and began to move about the Wildlands. After a few minutes,

“Kakaka!”

The men ran into a group of five Goblins.

“Get into a circle!”

Under Baltren’s instructions, the other two men took their place

behind him with their backs against each other. Goblins were less than half a human's height, but they were cooperative with each other.

The Goblins ran in first, swinging their swords. Baltren parried the sword away and landed a shot square on the goblin's head.

“Kack!”

The goblin who was hit on his head collapsed on the spot. Goblins weren't hard, as expected. Baltren got more courageous and smashed the head in of two more.

The White and Asian man also took one out each. After all, each one of them had fought against a Troll one on one and had won (despite having used Black Coins to do so).

Even if they were in large groups, the three men could probably overcome anything that wasn't a Troll. In fact, they could probably beat a lone Troll without many problems.

“This seems... doable.”

The White man standing next to him seemed to have regained some confidence. But the problem was the Asian man as usual.

“Hey... is there really a reason why we need to put ourselves in danger? I thought we already completed our objectives.

“Don’t you remember the sign from the beginning? Stat points and Black Coins per Goblin and etcetera. It’s probably better to kill more monsters.”

“Ah... is that so?”

“Of course. I don’t know how or why we started to ‘hunt’... but we do need Black Coins for later.”

Baltren, who was listening to the conversation, agreed.

“Yes. And that teenager said so himself. We don’t need to help him, so just go around the outskirts and hunt monsters.”

Baltren recalled his words.

‘You don’t need to help me. Just... stick together as a group and carefully hunt Goblins on the outskirts of the wildlands.’

And in the end, he did complete the boss all on his own. Baltren could tell that the teenager wasn’t simply showing off; there was something more. The Asian man stroke his chin while listening and then asked,

“...how do points get divided? It’s not like we can see drops or something.”

Baltren was also curious about this point. He thought for a

moment when he noticed the cube floating around. He spoke to the cube.

“Operator.”

The cube responded with the Operator’s voice.

[Yes, how may I help you?]

He carefully asked the question.

“Um... How do stat points and Black Coins get divided?”

[The reward per hunter is based on contribution during the raid.]

“Contribution?”

Baltren asked out of instinct. The Operator answered his question anyways.

[When hunting, points for damage taken, damage done, killing blow, buffs given, debuffs dealt, scouting and spotting are all totalled up and divided accurately.]

The three men looked amongst themselves. Until now, they have done almost nothing. The White man whispered to himself.

“I wonder what’s my contribution...”

And then the cube next to the White man answered.

[Your contribution is 4.3%.]

The Asian man quickly asked his cube.

“What about me? How much is my contribution?”

But the cube did not answer.

“Why? Why aren’t you telling me?”

While the Asian man was freaking out, Baltren calmly asked his cube,

“What is my contribution for this raid?”

[Your contribution is 7.2%.]

It wasn’t much, but it was much higher than the White man. His help in killing the four Trolls in the Boss’s hall had been the cause of the difference in their contribution.

The Asian man took hold of his cube and enunciated each word carefully.

“How much contribution points do I have from this raid?”

[Your contribution is 1.8%]

He jolted in surprise.

“What?!”

He had fewer points than even the White man. Acting cowardly and avoiding action as much as possible was coming back to bite him. The White man sighed in regret.

“Ahh, we should have just gone hunting as a group earlier, when that teenager told us to.”

Baltren rallied the men.

“There’s still 10 minutes until the raid ends. It’s not too late to try and hunt and make more points. Let’s go hunting and keep an eye out for anything strange.”

*

Sungjin charged through ‘Greenskin Wildlands’ as he kept searching.

“Eeek!”

“Cough...”

“Kack!”

He didn't stop and cut anything down that got in his way; Goblins, Orcs, Troll. It wasn't necessarily a bad thing since each kill he secured was more stat points and Black Coins later.

The problem was that he could not find any clues as to where the secret boss was located. He had scoured the entire wildlands, searching. But he couldn't find anything that seemed out of place.

“Operator, remaining time.”

[You will be summoned to the Hunter's Hall in 6 minutes and 24 seconds.]

“Damn it!”

Sungjin swore out loud as he continued to run without taking a break. But there were more corpses than there were living things. In other words, he had already searched almost the entire map.

“Kurman kao”

One Orc charged at the angry Sungjin. It was his bad luck to run into Sungjin. Before the Orc could even raise his axe, he was stabbed three times in vital points.

The Orc collapsed on the spot, bleeding. Sungjin took a look around at the surroundings. He could not see anything other than corpses now.

“Is there no hidden boss because this is the first raid?”

Once he thought this, he immediately changed his goal.

‘If so, I’ll wipe out the whole map.’

Sungjin now began chasing down every scrap of living thing he could find. Goblins who were trying to hide from him, Orcs who were eating away at the meat by the campfire, Trolls who stupidly stumbled towards him...

Then he ran into the other hunters who were fighting against three Trolls in a close 3v3 match.

Sungjin charged in like a lightning bolt, and beheaded two Trolls, spraying blood everywhere.

“Th...thank you.”

The Black Officer Baltren expressed his gratitude. But Sungjin

replied,

“So, were you able to find anything peculiar?”

“Nothing out of the ordinary.”

‘Was there really nothing hidden? No hidden boss, or secret location?’

Sungjin called over the Operator.

“Operator, what is the raid progress?”

[95% complete.]

95%. Only the 5% reserved for the secret boss was remaining. Since no more monsters could be found anywhere, it was certain that the hidden boss existed. Sungjin wanted to move on to search again, but Baltren stopped him.

“But...”

It irritated Sungjin that Baltren was dragging out his thoughts, so he urged him on.

“Yes? Please speak your mind.”

Baltren pointed towards somewhere with his club.

“About the Palisade that surrounds the Wildlands, isn’t that area a bit weird?”

Sungjin looked to the area pointed out by the club.

“I had worked on traffic control before and had to put up roadblocks. The fact that those wooden barricades there overlap... seems inefficient somehow.”

Sungjin immediately headed towards the wooden roadblocks to check. Now that he got a closer look at it, it definitely seemed strange. The rest of the wooden palisade were more or less perfectly circular in arrangement. But a portion of the wall here was indented inward. Sticking out from the wood was also something like a metal rod.

Although it looked extremely crude, Sungjin thought,

‘It looks just like a lever!’

Sungjin checked behind him. The three men were watching him from a distance. Once he checked this, Sungjin pulled the lever.

‘Rattle rattle’

A sound could be heard as if something was spinning, and the

palisade in front of him was lifted up.

Sungjin decided to go in.

Inside was a small area surrounded by more palisades, but it resembled the insides of a castle. And deeper inside was a dark red Orc chained up to the wall.

The fiery red skin somehow clashed with the image of “Greenskin Wildlands”. Sungjin was filled with certainty that this was it.

“Grrrrrrr”

The thing was emitting a deep growl while still chained. When Sungjin took one more step to check on the boss’s stats, he heard a warning come out of the cube.

[Caution! ‘Mad Orc Ruark’ Hidden boss has appeared.]

Sungjin gripped his katana tightly and prepared for battle. Then, he heard voices of the three men.

“Where is...”

“What’s that?”

Sungjin quickly shouted looking back at them.

“Go back! You’ll die!”

And as if on cue,

“Gragh!”

Sungjin heard a powerful roar behind him. By the time he turned around, the Orc had already cut the chains and was charging towards Sungjin.

Chapter 005 - Greenskin Wildlands (5)

Sungjin gripped his katana tightly. The Orc charged straight towards him as if it saw food for the first time after a long period of starvation.

Sungjin stabbed hard and fast towards the charging Orc's neck and heart.

‘Stab stab’

Sungjin's blade found their mark. Except, the red Orc did not respond at all. Despite aiming for vital points, there was no response from the Orc.

Orc continued his charge and swung his arms. Sungjin was forced to jump back, and the arms missed their mark.

But, just as Sungjin was going to counter attack, he saw that the chains attached to the arms were flying towards him with slight delay. Sungjin ducked in haste.

“Voom”

Sungjin felt something metallic sail through the air above his head. When he looked up, he saw the Orc swinging his arms once again. The problem wasn't just his hands.

Each time he swung his arms, the chains attached to his arms also flew towards him like whips. Sungjin was forced to look at the chains and predict their path.

He backed away and concentrated on defense..

“How annoying.”

The main boss traded speed for great power, whereas this boss had tremendous speed and reach.

It was the worst possible enemy for Sungjin, who had committed all points to Dexterity.

Because he put no points in Endurance, getting hit once or twice by the chains meant that it was game over.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa...”

As Sungjin retreated backwards while dodging and parrying, the other three men were busy escaping at full speed to avoid interrupting Sungjin’s fight. To be fair, Main boss nor the Secret boss was meant to be taken on alone.

But the others were absolutely of no help at all. Even as Sungjin slowly backed off and dodged the chains, he kept an eye out for mistakes. Once his arm became vulnerable, Sungjin took the opportunity and stabbed it three times.

‘Papapa’

But as if taking no damage, the Orc continued to swing away. His nickname “mad” was probably due to his rapid and wild swinging of arms and chains. Sungjin concluded his rapid attack, and immediately switched back to defense.

‘Something like this guy isn’t common even later on...’

Even though his every stat point was on Dexterity, the boss moved and attacked at a comparable speed.

‘First, I’ve got to do something about those arms...’

Once he established his plan of attack, he waited for a chance. He ducked from an incoming attack and then kicked the Orc’s shins.

“Bam!”

With the sound, the Orc fell over. But despite being downed, he didn’t let up the attack. He kept on swinging the chains from the ground.

Sungjin had to jump up to avoid chains coming at his feet. The chains rapidly passed by him. Once, twice, Sungjin leaped up into the air, as if playing high-risk jump rope. He embedded his scabbard into the ground between jumps.

When he jumped up, the chains from the Orc wrapped around it.

‘Did it work?’

But after just a brief pause, the scabbard was pulled away by the force of the chains and it flew away.

‘I need something heavier.’

Meanwhile, the mad Orc stood up.

“Kruagh!”

The Orc began attacking with his arms and chains even faster than before. Sungjin had no opportunity to counter attack and had to focus entirely on defense as he slowly backed off.

‘...Any way to stop his attacks...?’

Sungjin took a look around his surroundings, but he only saw the three men trying to escape from collateral damage.

Then Sungjin noticed the Policeman’s weapon. It was a club made of metallic material. While dodging chains with inhuman speed, he yelled at the policeman.

“Hey, Officer! Throw me your club!”

Baltren, who was watching from a distance, panicked when his name was mentioned. Sungjin yelled louder in frustration while dodging the Orc’s attacks.

“Damn it! The club!”

Baltren hesitated for a moment because the red Orc’s chains were destroying everything within 4~5 meters range. But once he made up his mind, he approached the two combatants

“Catch!”

After yelling loudly, Baltren threw his club towards Sungjin. Sungjin dodged the chains acrobatically by jumping backward and caught the club with his free left hand.

Holding Katana on the right and the club on the left, Sungjin bid his time until he could kick over the Orc again. Once the Orc was tripped, he flailed wildly from the ground again.

Sungjin planted the club deep into the ground and leaped up to dodge the chains, and landed on it, like some sort of martial artist from Murim. (see note)

When the chains came flying, it hit the Club and wrapped itself around it.

“Clink!”

It spun around few times and then became stuck on the club. For the first time since combat started, his arms were immobilized. Sungjin easily cut off his arm.

“Graaagh!”

Even while screaming in pain, the Orc continued to swing his chains about wildly. But he could not land a hit on Sungjin with two chains; dodging just one was a piece of cake. Sungjin dodged the chains with ease and cut off the other arm as well.

“Kaaaa!”

The Red Orc could no longer stand nor attack due to his loss of arms. Sungjin strolled up to the Orc.

“Be at peace.”

After bidding goodbye, Sungjin beheaded the Orc. Moments later, the Operator announced his victory.

[Hidden boss ‘Mad Orc Ruark’ Cleared.]

[Congratulations! You have managed to complete all objectives in this chapter!]

[Disregarding the remaining time and ending the raid

immediately.]

“Haaa...”

Sungjin let out a long sigh. He finally found the secret location and hunted every monster.

It was Sungjin’s first time fighting a hidden boss. First time around, the top priority for each raid was merely survival.

After a breather, Sungjin sheathed his sword back in the scabbard. He picked the club out of the ground and tossed it back to the Officer.

Once the Officer caught the club, all the cubes spoke out in unison in the Operator’s voice.

[Calculating Rewards Earned.]

[Monsters Slain. Goblins: 100. HobGoblins: 30. Orc 20. Troll: 10. Total 390 points.]

[Boss Monster Slain: Orc Chief cunning Kamul: 50 points.]

[Hidden Boss Mad Orc Ruark: 50 points.]

[Final point count: 490. Distributing points.]

Now each cube spoke individually, starting with the Asian man first.

[Your contribution is 0.7%. 3 Stat points, 3 Black Coins awarded. Raid Clear Bonus 50 Stat points and 50 Black Coins awarded. Distributing 53 Stat points and 53 Black Coins.]

“...”

Asian man frowned and looked around, as if not believing what he's hearing. Next up was the White man.

[Your contribution is 1.2%. 5 Stat points, 5 Black Coins awarded. Raid Clear Bonus 50 Stat points and 50 Black Coins awarded. Distributing 55 Stat points and 55 Black Coins.]

And then the Black Police Officer.

[Your contribution is 5.2%. 25 Stat points, 25 Black Coins awarded. Raid Clear Bonus 50 Stat points and 50 Black Coins awarded. Distributing 75 Stat points and 75 Black Coins.]

Finally Sungjin's turn.

[Your contribution is 92.9%. 455 Stat points, 455 Black Coins awarded. Raid Clear Bonus 50 Stat points and 50 Black Coins awarded. Distributing 505 Stat points and 505 Black Coins.]

“Whoa...”

The three men stare at Sungjin in envy and respect. But Sungjin

ignored their response and calculated in his head.

‘19 Coins from before and now... 524? With this, I can get...’

[And now we will distribute items.]

Once again, it began with the Asian man.

[Recovery Potion – Small x1]

A small potion bottle appeared in front of the Asian man, and he obediently picked it up from the ground, but he looked unhappily at it.

“This is it?”

White man’s turn.

[Recovery Potion – Small x2]

[Orc’s worn cloak]

He received his items with both hands but likewise looked fairly unhappily at them. Next was Baltren.

[Steel Shield]

[Troll’s Blood x1]

A large shield dropped by the Police Officer's feet. He quickly picked it up. Because he was wearing a bulletproof vest, it looked just as if he was carrying a riot shield. Sungjin's turn was last.

[Yanhurat – Mad god's voice]

[Free Ark – Freeman's shackles]

[Skull Romabel – Skull Crusher]

[Troll's Blood x4]

[Recovery Potion – Small x5]

A bunch of items dropped in front of him, and Sungjin bent over to pick them up. The Asian man spoke to himself.

“Wow, what a contribution hog. How selfish”

It was just a complain expressed under his breath, but Sungjin heard all of it. He frowned in annoyance.

“You. If it weren't for me, all of you would have died here. Either by monsters or by running out of time. Understood?”

The Asian man didn't know when to give up and kept on complaining.

“... you don't know that.”

That moment and that phrase, it finally pushed Sungjin over the edge. He had enough. Sungjin drew his katana and approached the man.

“Listen well. I will teach you about a hidden characteristic of the raid you don’t know about”

“What... what?”

Asian man backed up in surprise, but Sungjin swung his Katana few times at him.

‘Slash Slash Slash’

Following the sound of the blade cutting through the air, the Asian man’s shirt and pants were reduced to rags.

Once the Asian man realized what was going on, he grew pale and fell over. Sungjin got right into his face and spoke vehemently.

‘In raids, there is no rule forbidding a hunter from hunting another hunter. Understood?’

When the Asian man heard, he nodded vigorously. Sungjin stood up, still holding his Katana out. “Raids” were like this after all.

As one kills and murders, one’s notion of ethics and morality fades. Sungjin was no exception.

Sungjin had long forgotten ordinary ethics and morality after participating in raid after raid in his previous life.

Wielding his katana to take the man's life posed no qualms to Sungjin, but he put away his blade.

With his nonexistent reward from this raid, he will die in the next one. No, he'll probably die before the next raid even begins.

Once Sungjin put away his sword, the Operator resumed with the last briefing.

[Last but not the least, you will be awarded with titles you've earned on this raid.]

Translator's notes

Murim - This is korean version of cultivation/kung fu genre. Basically he's standing on the cloud like shown in chinese movies.

Chapter 006 - Greenskin Wildlands (6)

[Titles are granted based on personal achievements during Raids.]

[Variety of titles can be earned from different things.]

The Operator continued with her explanation.

[Each title has some form of effect,]

[And the hunter can only have one title active at any given time.]

[Active titles give 100% of the listed effect, but inactive titles only give 50% of the effect.]

Sungjin closed his eyes, hugging his Katana tightly.

[Titles appear above the hunter's head, and the other hunters may view them.]

[I bid you achieve greatness and earn great rewards.]

[Initiating distribution.]

Once again, it began with the Asian man.

[Coward – Max HP dropped by half.]

[Red outline illuminates you to monsters, making you easier to be found by monsters.]by monsters.]

‘What?!’

The Asian man, who would have complained otherwise, continued to sit where he lay, unable to move or say anything. The Operator skipped next to the White man.

[Novice Sentinel – Spear damage increased by 5%]

The man's expression didn't change, as if he wasn't sure if it was a good or bad thing yet. Baltren was up next.

[Criminal Arsonist – increased fire based damage by 20%]

“Police Officer with the title of Criminal Arsonist...”

Baltren whispered to himself unhappily. Finally Sungjin.

[Master Hunter – All Stats increased by 30%]

Sungjin, whose eyes were closed until now, raises his eyebrows.

‘30%?!’

It was an unimaginably large bonus. He had earned many titles from Raids in the past, but never a title with such advantageous bonus as this.

Titles were given based on how the raid was conducted. It was

based on merit and contribution.

Knowing exactly how the title ‘Master Hunter’ was granted is unclear, but it probably had to do with clearing the raid at 100% with overwhelming contribution percentage at close to 90%.

The Operator concluded handing out raid rewards and addressed the hunters.

[Your group has completed the raid faster than other groups.]

[You will be sent back to the Hunter’s Hall in 2 minutes and 37 seconds. Please hold]

Sungjin called out to the Operator.

“Operator, equip the Master Hunter title.”

[Title Equipped.]

He immediately checked his status.

“Show me the status window.”

Title: Master Hunter

HP: 130 MP: 220

Strength: 15 12(+3)

Dexterity: 43 33(+10)

Endurance: 13 10(+3)

Magic Power:18 14(+4)

Mind Power:22 17(+5) (See note)

Unallocated Stat Points: 505

Including Dex that he's been raising, all other stats have risen by 30%.

‘With this...finishing all objectives might be possible...’

Confidence surged within Sungjin. He decided to check what items he had received.

He took out a creepy necklace which was decorated with a large eye and rows of teeth.

“Operator, what is this?”

The Operator summoned the detailed specs of the item in a hologram window.

Yanhurat – Mad God's Voice

Heroic Necklace

Active Skill

Zealot(III)

For 30 seconds, increase damage by 300% and attack speed by 300%

Once active duration ends, reduce current hp to 1/3.

Cooldown 10 minutes

Necklace worn by the Mad Orc Ruark.

If you put it next to your ears, you can make out a faint voice.

‘Forced Zealot mode...?’

It was an item which had well-defined cost/benefit. Sungjin examined the necklace carefully. This item usually incorporated some features of the human face into its design.

Infernal staring eyes and a mouth shaped formation of teeth were key points of its appearance. This horrifying item looked like it could have belonged in Incan or Mayan temples.

While he was looking over the necklace,

‘Hey...’

Sungjin felt as if someone was whispering into his ears. So he brought the necklace up to his ears. Suddenly the phrase became

crystal clear.

‘Kill them’

He took off the necklace off his eyes. It was an item that felt tainted.

‘But... I might need it someday.’

Sungjin placed the necklace into his pocket. Next Item he examined was a familiar shackle connected to chains. It was the weapon wielded by the boss.

Free Ark – Free man’s Shackles

Heroic Wrist Armor – Defense 28%

Active Skill

Remove Crowd Control (III)

Removes unwanted Crowd Control effects.

Cooldown: 5 Minutes

Shackles bound to the Mad Orc Ruark.

Fairly small, it must have been extremely painful for the previous owner to have worn it.

‘Wait, it’s not a weapon? Armor Piece?’

He had spent a few minutes mindlessly dodging it, and it turns out it wasn’t even an actual weapon. He held up the shackles and instructed the Operator.

“Equip”

The Shackles stuck to his hands for few moments before picking an arm and locking onto his wrist. The chains wrapped around the entire length of his arm and protected him.

‘So this is how it works’

It was good. It was on the heavy side, but it seemed sturdy. Sungjin felt he could probably use it as a substitute shield if he ever needed it. And the Active effect looked useful as well.

Finally, Sungjin held the Club with a skull attached to it. He was familiar with it because this club was widely used by others in the previous life. It was common since it was the main boss's item drop.

Lots of hunters could be seen using this weapon soon after the 1st chapter.

Skull Romabel – Skull Crusher

Heroic Blunt Weapon – Strength A Dexterity D

Passive skill

Illusions of terror(II)

Weaken attack of nearby enemies by 10%

Chief Kamul's Club. He broke many skulls with this club. It is said that he had collected skulls that did not break from bashing it and had added them on to his club.

As expected, a great item. Special skill was nice, but even more valuable was the A rank stat booster which was extremely rare in the early game. The problem was that Sungjin had never used blunt weapons before.

‘It’s a great item... but I should sell it.’

Sungjin asked the Operator while holding the Club.

“Operator, how much can this be sold at the Black Market?”

[50 Black Coins]

Sungjin frowned. It was extremely inefficient to sell directly to the Operator.

‘Well, I guess I can’t help it since I don’t need it.’

Sungjin opened his mouth to sell it to the Operator when he noticed the club which the Police Officer was holding.

He was the only one who sincerely tried to help Sungjin through the Raid. He called him over.

“Come here, old man.”

Baltren was surprised when Sungjin addressed him again and stared at him. Sungjin seemed like a normal teenager at the beginning. But a few moments ago,

‘In raids, there is no rule forbidding a hunter from hunting another hunter. Understood?’

When Sungjin said this, he had an expression like as if he was a serial killer. Even the police are intimidated by serial killers. Baltren trembled slightly as he responded.

“Yes, what... What is it?”

“How many Black Coins do you have right now?”

Baltren answered immediately.

“76.”

Sungjin showed Baltren the club and said

“Buy this. 76 Coins.”

Baltren was shocked. He didn't know that item trading was even possible. Sungjin saw his hesitation and added more explanation.

“If you intend to continue using blunt weapons, you should buy it. Selling a Heroic weapon for 76 coins is basically the same as giving it away for free.”

Sungjin spoke the truth. Buying a Heroic weapon from the black market typically requires several hundred black coins.

Sungjin would be able to get just a bit more Black Coins, and he would be able to obtain a Heroic weapon at a dirt cheap price; a win-win situation.

Baltren briefly looked over the weapon and then nodded in agreement. No matter what he said, Sungjin was not wrong about anything yet.

“So how does trading work?”

“Simple. Put the cubes together and declare ‘trade’.”

Baltren nodded. Once the cubes were brought together, they snapped as if they were held by magnets. Sungjin spoke out first.

“Trade,”

Sungjin’s cube emitted a blue light. Baltren saw and followed suit.

Once he did, the cubes gave out an announcement.

[Trade initiated.]

[Please declare what Item you will be trading.]

Sungjin started.

“Skull Romabel Heroic Blunt Weapon.”

Baltren replied,

“76 Black Coins.”

“I accept the Trade.”

“I accept the Trade.”

[Trade complete!]

At the same time as the announcement, the club disappeared

from Sungjin's hands and appeared in Baltren's. Baltren inspected the weapon in his hands.

It was a strange weapon, decorated with skulls.

“It lowers attack power of your enemies, so... It should be useful in keeping you alive.”

Baltren asked Sungjin carefully.

“How do you know all this?”

“...Even if I tell you, you won't be able to believe me.”

Baltren decided not to pry. He felt that if he insisted, the teenager would not be willing to give him a satisfactory response. The Operator finally gave them the status update.

[You will return to the Hunter's Hall in 1 Minute.]

1 Minute. Sungjin Closed his eyes and held his katana close. Baltren sneaked a few glances at Sungjin.

Right now, he looked like an ordinary Teenager. He even looked somewhat innocent. And to a certain extent, it even made sense why he got upset earlier and made that angry face.

He slowly came to the understanding that these raids were to be carried out by betting one's life. Having a coward and an inciter like the Asian man represented a risk to one's life.

Baltren rested the Club on the ground and thought deeply, at the words Sungjin spoke to the Asian man.

‘You. If it weren't for me, all of you would have died here. Either by monsters or by running out of time. Understood?’

This declaration, in truth, also applied to Baltren as well. He couldn't imagine that he could stand up to the secret boss and his wild flailing chains, the giant club-wielding Orc Chieftain, or even a small group of Trolls.

If it weren't for the teenager, he would have died. Baltren understood it perfectly. So he approached the teenager once more. He couldn't rest well without even knowing the name of his benefactor.

“Please tell me your name. Who are you?”

Sungjin stared at the police officer. Until now, he had had many comrades. And every single one of them died.

Even if he gives this man his name, the only result it could give was regret, disappointment, and sadness. There was no point to letting people know your name. Sungjin shook his head.

“... We will never meet each other again.”

But Baltren persisted.

“You can’t know that. Please, I wish to know.”

Sungjin paused for a moment and gave only the initials of his last name.

“K. That is my name.”

“Kei... I’ve said before, but my name is...”

Sungjin interrupted him.

“I remember. Baltren. Gerald Baltren. Become strong. And then survive. And who knows, maybe we might cross paths again...”

With that said, the Operator began a countdown.

[You will return to the Hunter’s Hall in 10 seconds.]

[9, 8, 7, 6...]

With only a few seconds left, Baltren expressed his gratitude to Sungjin.

“... Thank you for everything. I was able to survive thanks to you.”

[5, 4, 3]

And Baltren wanted to say a final goodbye before the time was over. Then he noticed the title floating above Sungjin’s head. He combined the title and the name together and bid him goodbye.

“We will meet again, Master Hunter K.”

[2, 1]

And with that, the hunters disappeared from the Greenskin Wildlands.

(Translator’s note)

Mind power affects mana pool, magic power affects magic damage

Editor’s Note: The legend begins people! Master hunter K!!!!
Hype!!

Chapter 007 - Black Market First Shopping

Sungjin was teleported to the Hunter's Hall. The Hall was still overflowing with unfamiliar faces. He could not see the end of the crowd.

‘Well, numbers will thin out soon enough’

This gathering of hunters represented the top 1% of humanity's strongest individuals. It would have been impossible to clear the first Raid ‘Greenskin Wildlands’ without considerable individual skill and talent.

It was possible that a lucky few were given a free ride to the end, regardless of their individual merit, by overachievers like Sungjin. But those people were typically eliminated during the next raid. No, they won't even be able to make it to the next raid.

This wasn't the type of world you could survive by relying on other people. Soon the Operator began her announcement.

[Welcome back. And congratulations]

[To everyone who successfully completed the raid and made it back]

The Operator's face reappeared on the screen above, but no one was shouting profanities. Most of the people were suffering from PTSD (see note) or mourning the loss of their comrades.

[As you might have experienced for yourselves in the first Raid,]
[You cannot complete the raids with your current physical limitations.]

[Hence, raising your stats beyond human limits is necessary.]

[There are several ways to achieve this.]

Most of the crowd appeared to be exhausted, but everyone listened carefully to each and every word the Operator spoke. It was self-evident that they could not survive without listening to her tips and advice.

[First, Hunt monsters and obtain status points.]

[I believe you have already learned about this during the first Raid.]

[Unallocated Stat points do not benefit you]

[So please remember to allocate them before heading into battle.]

By now, most people should be well aware of their stats. It is nearly impossible to have survived until this stage without putting in stat points.

[Second, Earn Titles and get bonus stat points.]

[Everyone should have earned at least one title from the first raid.]

[Equipping the title enables the selected title to perform at 100% of their listed effect, and inactive titles only provide 50% of their given effects.]

[The more titles you earn, the more advantages you'll gain.

Please use the title that best suits the situation as you progress through the Raid.]

There aren't many with a title floating above their heads. Among those that do, most have titles like 'Scout', 'Orc Hunter', and 'Novice Swordsman'.

Sungjin wore the Master Hunter title, but no one paid much attention to it. Not many understood what it meant yet.

[Third, is equipment. Equipments are undoubtedly important.]

[They give bonus stats, and some even have special skills imbued upon them.]

Most of the hunters were focused on the Operator's explanation, except for Sungjin. He didn't need to listen because he already knew all of it.

[It is possible to receive a piece of equipment through the Raid reward system, but are readily available for purchase through the Black Market.]

[Explanation will continue after changing the venue.]

[You will be teleported in 10 seconds. 9, 8]

The Operator began her countdown. But Sungjin still had his arms crossed and was lost in thought.

'19 Coins from the first round, 505 from the first raid, 76 traded

with Baltren. Total is exactly 600 Black Coins...’

[3, 2, 1]

*

The place Sungjin was teleported to was a Bazaar, with a canopy draped above.

“Welcome, welcome!”

It was a normal marketplace with vendors selling wares at the stalls. Except for one detail. The vendors were not human. To be exact, they were all demi-humans.

The Axe merchant was half human and half cow (Minotaur), the Spear merchant was half human and half horse (Centaur), the Fire Magic merchant was half human and half dragon.

For newcomers, it was a sight to behold, but Sungjin was already familiar with the place. The Operator continued her explanation.

[This place is called ‘The Black Market’. It is a Bazaar where Black Coins are used as currency.]

[Hunters may come here to obtain or sell items by trading with their Black Coins.]

[The goods are not limited to equipment; you could also purchase magic tomes which are necessarily needed to learn magic]

[or consumables and accessories needed for battle, such as the

Recovery Potion.]

The Operator continued with her long explanations covering most of the basics, although she glossed over a few important secrets of this place.

[You can no longer use Cubes to purchase items, so please complete your shopping in this place before going out on raids.]

Once the Operator's explanations finished, Sungjin began walking towards the inner part of the market.

“Dear Customer, please take a look!”

Someone tried to grab his attention, but he ignored the merchant and kept walking. His destination was a stall run by a half human half snake.

[This is the Katana shop called ‘Last Edge’, run by the merchant named Kenneth]

[You will be able to find all sorts of katanas on sale here.]

Once he entered the stall flaps, a Naga greeted him.

“Welcome... to the ‘Last Edge’ SSSssss”

There was a large variety of Swords hung about in the shop, but there was only one sword Sungjin was interested in. A crimson

blade hung on the wall on one side.

“May I see that real quick?”

“My my, what a great eye for quality! SSsss”

The Naga merchant replied with a kind tone.

“Please wait a moment. I will go fetch it for you.”

The Naga handed over the crimson blade to Sungjin. Sungjin’s face brightened up for the first time since the Hunt restarted.

This was the weapon he wielded until his last moments. It was like an old friend to him. The Operator opened up the weapon status window.

Blood Vengeance – Blood’s Revenge

Legendary Katana – Strength SS Dexterity A

Active Skill

Baptism of Blood(IV) – consumes 100 HP per second from the user to increase attack damage.

According to legend, the owner of this Katana lost his family to the treachery of his liege, and carried out his vengeance against the betrayer and all the men loyal to him.

The Operator kept the window open for him, but he did not read it. He already had it memorized. Sungjin swung the sword twice to test it. He wanted to buy it immediately, but the problem was the price.

“It is worth 9700 Black Coins, SSssss”

The coins in Sungjin’s possession now numbered at 600. Not even close. Sungjin returned the sword to the Naga.

‘Right now I can’t even use the active skill for more than a second anyway’

Sungjin had only come here to see his old friend. Now Sungjin headed towards his real destination. A Jewelry shop located deep within the Black Market. After entering deeper and deeper into the canopied bazaar, Sungjin finally arrived at his actual destination.

[This place is merchant Meridian’s shop by the name ‘Eternal

Moment’.]

[Various jewelry such as necklace and rings are sold here]

“Hey there”

The merchant here was a haughty catwoman who ran this shop. Once Sungjin was inside the shop, he immediately told her what he wanted.

“I came to purchase the Heart of Gold.”

“I do have the item... but it’s a bit pricey for a hunter who only completed the first raid.”

“I already know. 500 Black Coins. I have the money, so please give me the item.”

“Oh, how surprising...”

The shopkeeper’s eyes twinkled as she took out the item.

Heart of Gold – Ring of the Rich

Rare Ring

Passive

Collect Interest(II)

Upon receiving Black Coin as Raid reward, gain an additional 10% more.

Famous jeweler Tarim's Ring.

It is said that he lost it while traveling across the Mage's Canyon.

A simple looking ring with a lone blue sapphire embedded on it. It was the ring Sungjin was looking for.

“Operator, carry out the transaction.”

Sungjin's cube approached Meridian and emitted a bright light.

[Heart of Gold purchased for 500 Black Coins]

The ring appeared on top of Sungjin's palm.

“Equip”

It moved on its own and fit itself on Sungjin's ring finger. He inspected the ring on his hand. He was planning on making this item his first purchase with his first 500 Coins.

The reason was simple; it was an item with an excellent rate of return. He wasn't sure about the payout of the next raid, but later on, it was possible for him to receive more than 5000 Black Coins per raid. In other words, the item more than paid for itself with every raid.

Of course, Sungjin was the only person capable of taking advantage of this absurd item; it did absolutely nothing to improve his combat capability.

If a hunter aside from Sungjin tried to invest 500 Black Coins in the early game, then their chances of survival dropped near to zero. It wasn't even likely that any other hunter even managed to get 500 coins until now.

Sungjin finished his shopping and left the shopping districts for the outskirts. Not too far away, he saw a small inn with an image of a bed on the sign post.

Above the entryway, a large sign read 'Ninety Nine Nights'. The Operator began her explanation.

[This place is an inn called "Ninety Nine Nights"]

[It is a place for Hunters to rest until the next raid.]

Sungjin entered the inn straight away. He was already familiar with the place. The Inn proprietor was a half human half owl. The Innkeeper greeted Sungjin politely.

“Welcome to ‘Ninety Nine Nights’. My name is Dalupin, and I am the owner of this inn. I will do my best to take care of your needs. Would you like to check in?”

Sungjin sat at the nearby table.

“I’ll check in later; please bring me some food.”

“What would you like to eat? The menu is in front of you.”

There was a menu placed neatly on top of each table, but he did not reach out for one; he had it all memorized.

“Medium rare Beef rib steak.”

After a few minutes, the owl demi-human brought a plate. On it was a seared medium rare beef rib steak. Sungjin took a fork and a knife and placed a bite-sized portion of meat into his mouth.

The meat melted in his mouth. The quality of the food here would not lose out to any famous restaurants on Earth. Sungjin enjoyed his soft and perfectly cooked meat as he asked the Operator.

“Operator, how much time until the next raid?”

[9 Hours, 3 Minutes and 36 Seconds]

The remaining time was free time for him to spend as he pleased. Eating and sleeping in “Ninety Nine Nights” was free. Not that it alleviated the fear of death.

Sungjin left the plate on the table once he finished eating, and headed towards the room upstairs.

The bath in “Ninety Nine Nights” was quite relaxing. Taking a warm bath in the tub was an excellent way to relieve his stress.

Sungjin sat inside the tub thinking. Why had the Operator revived him, were all ‘last survivors’ given the reset chance? But there was no clear answer.

After all, it wasn’t even understood why it was necessary to host and carry out hunts. All he could think of was that as he fights and survives, the answer might reveal itself one day.

‘...Since this is my second chance...’

Sungjin submerged himself up to his neck.

‘I will perfectly clear all objectives this time...and maybe then... I will find the answers.’

(Translator’s note)

PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

State of mind-numbing shock after life and death ordeal. Most commonly seen in soldiers, disaster victims, or abused children.

Chapter 008 - Ahenna's Forest (1)

In the morning, Sungjin took a quick shower and went downstairs to the dining area for breakfast.

“Egg tart, 2 Croissants, and butter.”

Downing the simple breakfast, Sungjin checked his time.

“Operator, how much time is left before the next Raid?”

[15 minutes and 32 seconds.]

‘15 minutes...’

There was one last thing he needed to complete before the next raid began. It was allocating his stats.

“200 to Strength, 200 to Dexterity, and 105 to Endurance.”

[Strength rose by 200 points. Dexterity rose by 200 points. Endurance rose by 105 points.]

“Show me my status screen.”

HP: 1500 MP: 220 (See Note for HP MP calculation)

Strength: 276 212 (+64)

Dexterity: 303 233 (+70)

Endurance: 150 115 (+35)

Magic Power: 18 14 (+4)

Mind Power: 22 17 (+5)

Unallocated Points: 0

Sungjin inspected his new status window. He spent a long time last night thinking about how to allocate his points. 200 points to Strength and Dexterity, and 105 to Endurance. With this much, his Speed and Attack power were probably one of the best in the world with endurance being within top tier.

This was because it was difficult for other hunters to earn anywhere close to 3 digit status points from the first raid.

‘I doubt I’ll even take damage, though...’

Raids were unpredictable; Many things could happen. He might have to complete the Raid entirely alone. So Sungjin took the minimum safety measures.

A moment’s slip and a small mistake could lead to death in a raid. Confidence or not, Safety should come first, and so Sungjin decided to invest for the first time into Endurance.

“Time?”

[7 minutes and 27 seconds remaining.]

“Iced Americano. No Syrup”

Shortly after, the Innkeeper Dalupin brought one cup of Iced Americano on a tray. Sungjin waited leisurely while drinking his coffee.

He downed the last bit and then was teleported away.

*

Oppressive darkness, rustle of leaves in the wind, and a half-lit moon above... The howling of wolves could be heard from a distance.

“Aooooooo~”

Sungjin was teleported in the middle of a thick forest. The Operator began her announcement.

[Welcome. This place is called the “Ahenna’s Forest”.]

[It is a place filled with insidious and cunning predators of the night.]

[Same as the previous raid, the first 4 phases will be combat tutorials.]

[If you take fatal damage,]

[or if the enemy is not annihilated within the time limit, the hunter will be killed.]

Phase 1 – Gray Wolf

Time Limit: 3 Minutes

At the same time just as the announcement ended, a Gray wolf jumped out of the trees. Sungjin took out his Katana without taking his eyes off the wolf. Unlike the monsters of the first Chapter, it bared its teeth from a distance.

“Grrrrr...”

It growled in a deep rumbling tone. Seeing the wolf brought back memories of the first time he completed the “Ahenna’s Forest” raid.

‘I think I remember... This raid is no pushover.’

The moment Sungjin got distracted by his thoughts, the Wolf took immediate notice and charged at him.

“Kyan!”

But as expected, the one that was slain was the wolf.

Completion Reward: Stat Point 5

Kill Reward: Black Coin 5 (see note on Heart of Gold bonus)

Sungjin took a look at the blood on his katana and thought,

‘I don’t think clearing the normal part of the raid will pose any difficulty...’

The biggest problem was the hidden boss and the secret place. No matter how combat capable Sungjin was, discovering secret locations and then defeating the hidden boss within the time limit was no easy feat. Especially if done alone.

‘I really hope I get some good comrades this time...’

Raids were originally designed to be cleared with the cooperation of five participants. Even if the teammates are unable to contribute much, at the minimum, Sungjin would need members that were able to follow simple instructions.

‘If any are like Baltren, it’d be superb.’

But whoever you met in a Raid was a random occurrence. Luck

was perhaps the most important factor in surviving the Raids.

Although, this did not apply to Sungjin since the restart.

Phase 2 – Shadow Puma

Time Limit: 3 Minutes

[Caution: Shadow Pumas move silently in the darkness and ambush their prey]

Despite entering the next phase, Sungjin was still lost in thought.

‘I had pretty good luck in my previous life. Thanks to my comrades, I was able to survive to...’

Suddenly,

“Krah!”

A loud scream erupted from behind Sungjin. He didn’t even turn, and threw himself to the side and tumbled. A Black colored Puma landed where he stood a second ago.

The Puma touched down noiselessly, despite being physically larger than the Gray wolf..

Sungjin raised his Katana. The Puma, who failed his ambush, watched Sungjin with its eyes. Due to the dark colored coat of the Puma, only its reflective amber eyes were visible in the night.

“Krah!”

The Puma charged towards Sungjin once more. It was no match for him. Sungjin waited for the Puma to get airborne before ducking out of the way and striking with his Katana.

‘Vszzt~’

The sound of flesh ripping off the bone filled the air. Straightening his clothes, Sungjin nonchalantly gazed towards the Puma. The Puma was cut from the front legs to the other side of its stomach. The cut was so severe that its intestine leaked out.

“Grr...”

The Puma, so full of life just moments before, collapsed after taking two steps and perished.

Completion Reward: 10 Status points

Kill Reward: 10 Black Coins

Sungjin continued to daydream about the past life.

‘I had some really amazing comrades. And not so great ones...’

Sungjin stopped his thoughts there. He recalled a face he didn’t want to remember.

Phase 3 – Grizzly Bear

Time Limit: 3 Minutes

“Grrrrr”

3rd Phase’s mob was a sizable bear. It was 1.5 times taller than an average man. Its arms were as thick as a man’s waist, and five claws as long as a man’s arms grew on each hand.

“Grah!”

Unlike the Shadow Puma, the Bear charged straight towards Sungjin. But this Grizzly bear was unlucky. Due to the upsetting memory, Sungjin was already angry.

Sungjin’s Katana flashed, illuminated by the moonlight for a split second, and the bear collapsed lifelessly on the spot.

For the majority of hunters, this Grizzly Bear was like a

gatekeeper, preventing entry into the raid. But to Sungjin, it was more like a door flap; pushed aside at whim.

Completion Reward: 20 Stat Points

Kill Reward: 20 Black Coins

Although he received the stat points, he did not allocate them. Acting out of habit, he only swung his sword once to remove the blood on its blade.

Sungjin's Katana, whose ranks were only Strength C and Dexterity D, had cut through the bear in a single strike. The only reason this basic Katana was able to demonstrate such power was thanks to Sungjin's oppressively high stats.

The sword was good enough for the present, but as the chapters progressed, it would get more and more outclassed by the other weapons. Sungjin couldn't help but recall the familiar grip on his legendary weapon 'Blood Vengeance'.

'If I collect enough Black Coins...'

Phase 4 – Dire Wolf

Time Limit: 3 Minute

Between the trees, a Grizzly bear sized pale wolf appeared. The Operator began her explanation.

[Caution: The Dire Wolf is slightly weaker than the Grizzly bear]
[But it can command nearby Gray wolves]

“Awooooooo~”

The Dire Wolf let out a long howl. And soon, three gray wolves appeared at its side. Four wolves including the Dire Wolf surrounded Sungjin.

Wolves were the first monsters who operated in groups using coordinated attacks against hunters. Sungjin, who had absentmindedly progressed through the phases, gripped his Katana properly for the first time and assumed a battle position.

The reason why the upcoming raid was so challenging was due to these wolves. The wolves, who were orbiting around Sungjin, suddenly charged towards him.

Once he saw them make a move, Sungjin charged towards the weakest one of the pack. In one smooth stroke, he severed the wolf's head.

And to follow through, he kicked the stomach of another wolf that tried to pounce on him.

“Kyan!”

The wolf collapsed on its side, whimpering like a hurt dog. The other two used that opening to attack him simultaneously.

These wolves would even sacrifice their members in an attack to out maneuver their enemy. Sungjin swiftly swung his katana towards the larger Dire Wolf.

The Dire Wolf saw Sungjin turn towards him and stopped to dodge the katana. Sungjin, who was facing the Dire Wolf had to use his unarmed left arm to stop the other wolf.

“Kyan!”

The wolf bit into the chains on his left arm, causing metallic sounds to ring out.

“Creak!”

The wolf, struggling to bite through the steel chains, quickly lost its head to Sungjin’s blade. Only two wolves left.

Even though the Dire Wolf was still alive, this fight no longer posed any challenge to Sungjin. This time, he made the first move.

The two remaining wolves tried to out maneuver him, but Sungjin’s katana knew no mercy. Within two to three swings of his

blade, the wolves collapsed powerlessly.

[All Monsters eliminated. Closing the Phase.]

Completion Reward: 25 Stat points

Kill Reward: 25 Black Coins

Sungjin examined the shackle and chains binding his left arm; Free Ark. The wolf didn't even manage to leave a dent on it.

‘This is quite useful.’

[You have completed all phases faster than the other Hunters.]

[Please wait until the others complete their phases.]

As expected, Sungjin finished early. The environment changed once the tutorial was completed. A campfire appeared in the middle of the forest. This was where the hunters were being gathered.

Sungjin sat by the fire and waited for the other hunters to show up, keeping the Katana in his embrace.

[All hunts completed.]

[Synchronizing Hunters.]

Along with the Operator's words, the environment warped slightly as Sungjin watched patiently. One by one, Hunters appeared out of thin air.

Translator's Note:

Hp is calculated by 10X the total Endurance and MP is calculated by 10X the total Mind Power.

In the stats, first number is total, 2nd is allocated stat points, and 3rd is modifiers.

So Endurance 150 115 (+35) means total = 150, 115 stat points invested into Endurance, and 35 additional stats from titles/items/buffs.

The Heart of Gold Bonus only applies to final raid completion reward. It does not apply to these phase completion reward.

Chapter 009 - Ahenna's Forest (2)

The people that emerged in front of Sungjin were, once again, of different physique and races. A bespectacled young Westerner, a white-haired old man, a very short Southeastern Asian, and a tall white man.

But truth be told, their actual physique, size or race did not matter. The more reliable indicator of their strength was the titles they earned until now. Sungjin looked up and glanced at the titles.

The young Westerner had “Novice Swordsman”, the Southeastern Asian had “Novice Scout”, the white-haired old man had “Lumberjack”, and the tall white man had the “Hooligan” title. Sungjin shook his head in disappointment upon seeing their titles.

No one was particularly talented. But it was alright. As it was now, Sungjin had enough combat spec to solo this raid's objectives for a Full Clear. The Operator began the mission briefing.

Phase 5 – Ahenna's Forest Raid

Objective – Hunt the Wolf Queen ‘Ahenna’

Time Limit: 25 Minutes.

[Complete the objective within the Time Limit.]

[If you cannot, you will die.]

Once the Operator's briefing ended, the tall white man with the 'Hooligan' title stepped forward and addressed the group.

"Gentlemen, gather up so we can see your ugly mugs."

The man truly embodied the word 'Hooligan'; a tattoo covered his shoulders, and he carried himself with a subtle air of arrogance and authority.

The 'Novice Scout' Southeastern Asian man and the bespectacled 'Novice Swordsman' hesitated for a moment and moved closer to join the 'Hooligan'. The Hooligan complained.

"Wow... all I get are these weaklings."

The 'Lumberjack' old man and Sungjin maintained their distance from the campfire, watching wordlessly. The 'Hooligan' took a note of it and addressed them.

"Hey, Old Jack, can't you hear me? Get over here. And you, Master Hunter? Get over here if you don't want to die."

The mood was just horrible, much like the first Raid.

'...I'll have to carry out this raid by myself again.'

Sungjin gave up trying to solicit cooperation. It didn't even

matter as he did not require their help. He had enough skill and power to complete the raid by himself. The only part that gave Sungjin insecurity was the secret location and the hidden boss.

Even though Sungjin was confident he could fight any battle perfectly, he didn't feel the same when it came to searching and defeating the hidden boss within the time limit.

‘In the end, the biggest obstacle is the time limit.’

[The Raid begins in 1 minute.]

Before the Raid began, Sungjin called upon the Operator.

“Operator, add all stat points to Dexterity.”

[Dexterity rose by 60 points.]

Raising Dexterity was the obvious choice. After the tutorial, he didn't feel that anything in this raid could seriously threaten him.

He could already cut the strongest mob in this forest, the Grizzly Bear, in a single strike. Instead of raising strength, it made more sense to invest in Dexterity to increase his speed even further.

But now that he had invested in Dexterity, he was regretting investing into Endurance.

‘Maybe I wasted the points. I know I have to raise it at some point, but speed is more important right now.’

And while Sungjin was reflecting over his point allocations,

“Hello hello!”

From the woods, a thin man walked out. The 6th person. Everyone’s gaze was drawn towards him.

He was carrying a rucksack almost as large as his body. When Sungjin saw him, he recalled his memories from the past.

‘Oh yeah, he exists.’

“I am the wandering merchant Aindell. Please purchase some goods from me before the raid begins. Since we are way out in the boonies, the goods here will be more expensive than those in a regular shop. He he”

The Operator’s cube only sold items during the first chapter. Now the only place available to buy them from was the Black Market.

But from time to time, Wandering Merchants arrived at the raid location to sell on site. The Hooligan approached him.

“Who the fuck are you?”

The Merchant smiled sheepishly.

“As I explained, I am the wandering merchant Aindell. I sell potions and other small goods. Also...”

The Hooligan gripped him by the collar and lifted him up threateningly.

“You don’t get Coins, give me all you’ve got, bitch”

A warning came from the Cubes.

[Warning:]

[Attacking a non-hostile lifeform will cause penalties from the Raid Rewards.]

The Hooligan let go of the merchant immediately.

“Whoa whoa. That’s no good at all. My bad, sorry about that.”

“Cough cough..”

Aindell let out few fake coughs and continued.

“As I was saying, the wildlife here are afraid and weak to fire.... So I recommend purchasing some Salamander’s ash. For archers, I

also sell fire arrows. I don't need to explain how useful Recovery Potions are, right?"

At his sales pitch, 'Novice Swordsman', 'Novice Scout', and even 'Lumberjack' lined up and bought items from the merchant.

"Three Salamander's ash please."

"How much are the fire arrows?"

"I want three Salamander's ash too, and three Recovery Potions."

The others quickly spent their coins earned from the previous raid on consumables. Their actions made sense since they all just wanted to survive.

[Raid begins in 30 seconds].

The Hooligan watched for a few moments, and then hesitantly asked,

"Hey, uh... give me some Salamander's ash too."

He was also able to purchase an item. The Merchant did not hold a grudge against the Hooligan and magnanimously sold it at the same price. Aindell directed his gaze towards Sungjin once he was done finalizing the transaction.

“Sir, do you need any items?”

Sungjin declined, shaking his head.

“Hehe, understood.”

He smiled and laughed jovially. But Sungjin found that to be even more unsettling. He could not tell if this was a human or something else.

‘Is it like an NPC in an MMORPG?’

The Operator finally began the countdown.

[Raid will commence in 10 seconds. 10,..]

‘I guess it’s nothing strange when there’s even an Operator.’

Sungjin pushed aside his thoughts and drew out his sword.

“Hey, I told you to get over here!”

The Hooligan tried to get Sungjin to join him, but Sungjin replied

“Be careful and move as a group. Hunt the lone Wolves and Bears so you won’t die. Be careful about the Pumas that suddenly drop out of trees.”

Sungjin suggested to them.

[2, 1, 0 the Raid Begins!]

At the same time as the raid start, Sungjin dashed into the dark forest. He heard Aindell's voice from behind.

"I will remain in this location. If you need consumables during the middle of the raid, please come by at any time!"

Hearing that, Sungjin thought to himself.

'There is no chance of that happening. I need to save up money and buy my Katana.'

*

Sungjin rapidly hunted every wild beast he could lay his eyes on as he charged through the forest. He hunted packs of wolves led by the Dire Wolves, as well as Pumas that silently dropped out of trees.

"Guwah!"

A grizzly bear charged at a speed unfitting of its size. But Sungjin cut it down in one swift strike. Thanks to more than 200 points invested in both Strength and Dexterity, any wildlife that came in

contact with his sword was cut down like a piece of paper.

Sungjin didn't concentrate on the fights, but rather on finding anomalies in the area. Clearing the raid was not high on his priority list.

Clearing the Chapter and having high contribution points were nice. But because Sungjin had both the Heart of Gold and the 'Master Hunter' title equipped, missing out on a few stat points and Black coins were acceptable.

The most important thing was the Item rewards obtained from the hidden bosses and locations. These items were guaranteed to be rated 'Heroic' at the minimum. Items he would gladly spend tens of thousands of Black Coins in the market to buy.

From time to time, Sungjin saw Direwolves mixed within the crowd. Unlike other mobs, even he couldn't take them on lightly. They were strong, dexterous, and most importantly, cunning.

They called upon Gray wolves to perform cooperative attacks. Of course, the side that perished were the wolves.

"Haa.... Operator."

Sungjin addressed the Operator after spending a considerable amount of time cutting the animals apart to pieces.

"Time?"

[19 minutes 49 seconds remaining.]

He spent almost 5 minutes turning the forest inside out.

‘It should be fairly close now...’

The Wolf Queen ‘Ahenna’ was not in a set location. She appears automatically after the number of wolves slain pass a certain threshold.

“Kwah!”

Sungjin quickly twisted his body and spun around with his Katana. Above, a Shadow Puma was cut from the neck to its armpit.

‘These guys always ambush just as I forget about them.’

When Sungjin was about to sheath his Katana, he spotted a Gray wolf between the trees. Sungjin drew the Katana out once more.

But, unlike other Gray wolves, it neither attacked nor watched him. It faced the sky and let out a howl.

“Awoooo~~”

Soon, other wolves in the area joined in.

“Awoo Awoo”

The surrounding was now filled with the howl of the wolves.

“Awoooo~!”

With so many wolves, the howling continued without an end. Listening carefully, Sungjin could tell.

“...She’s here.”

And as if to confirm his feelings, the Operator announced the arrival of the boss.

[Warning! Boss Monster]

[The Queen of Wolves ‘Ahenna’ has appeared!]

A Moment later, a wolf twice as large as a Grizzly Bear appeared. Cunning eyes and a coat as white as snow, Ahenna looked almost divine.

‘But foes are foes.’

Sungjin prepared himself, drawing his Katana.

“AWOOOO~”

Ahenna howled in the wind, and a dozen or so Dire Wolves appeared at her side. Each of the Dire Wolves brought with them several Gray Wolves. Sungjin quickly estimated their numbers.

‘Just a rough guess... 50 to 60...’

The most difficult part about this raid was that there was a massive numerical disadvantage.

‘Last time, I had great teammates, and so we were able to overcome this Boss somehow...’

And while lost in thought, he was interrupted by voices coming from behind him.

“Where is she? That queen bitch?”

“I think I heard the howling from over there, sir.... Wait, wha wha?”

“What the hell? That gigantic beast is a wolf? We’re supposed to fight that?”

Sungjin did not turn. It was obvious who it was. He gripped his katana tightly and bit his lips.

Chapter 010 - Ahenna's Forest (3)

“Awo awoo awoooo~!”

Ahenna let out a long series of howls. On the surface, it sounded like a ordinary wolf's howl, but the intonation and pitch subtly changed; as if she was speaking. Upon hearing her voice, the giant wolf pack began moving as a group.

“What the hell?”

While the other three hunters were panicking, the wolves closed in surrounding all four of them.

“Whoa whoa whoa...”

One of the hunters who was backing up walked into Sungjin's back.

Sungjin, already out of patience, spat out a declaration to the other hunters.

“The Boss is mine. I don't care what you all want to do, just don't get in my way.”

Sungjin charged into the army of wolves towards Ahenna, as soon as he was done speaking, leaving behind the three hunters. Ahenna, who was giving orders to the other wolves via her voice

stopped and prepared for battle.

In the blink of an eye, she attacked with her claws at an incredible speed.

But Sungjin dodged her claws with an even greater speed, ducking under her attack.

It was a hundredth of a second, but Sungjin saw her eyes grow wide as if to say “How can you dodge this?”. And it was reasonable for her to be surprised as there were very few hunters capable of evading her attack this early in the raids.

‘Die’

Sungjin initiated an upward slash as soon as the paws were out of the way. Ahenna leaped back thanks to her animalistic instincts, but the tip of Sungjin’s Katana still managed to reach her snout.

“Kaaa!”

Ahenna retreated, screaming in pain. Sungjin felt the feedback from the strike. It was a shallow cut.

‘Not enough damage.’

Sungjin prepared to charge in to initiate a follow-up strike, but

“Kao!”

A Dire Wolf charged at Sungjin from the side. Sungjin dodged it by ducking under his attack, but another charged at him.

Sungjin was forced to take a step back. And within moments, Ahenna had backed off and was immediately surrounded by a dozen Dire wolves. Gray wolves rushed in to encircle her completely.

Sungjin frowned.

‘How diligently they serve their queen.’

Suddenly,

“Pew!”

Sungjin heard the sound of an arrow flying through the air from behind him. He saw the arrow fly in his direction. While deliberating whether or not he should knock it out of the air, he realized it was flying above his head.

‘What was that about?’

When Sungjin checked behind him, he saw that the other Hunters were fighting for their lives.

“Fuck! Kill it!”

The ‘Novice Scout’ was shooting arrows randomly, missing every shot. The ‘Novice Swordman’ and the ‘Hooligan’ were waving flaming weapons (imbued with Salamander’s ash) wildly without thought.

“Stay away! Stay away!”

Ahenna howled a command to the wolves.

“Awooawoawo~~”

The wolves upon hearing her call stopped attacking and moved as one. They orbited around the four hunters. Although they were wolves, they were orderly and precise in the execution of their queen’s commands.

Sungjin fixed his grip on the katana and entered battle stance.

‘...I need to kill the leader first...’

Sungjin scanned the sea of wolves. It was not difficult to find her. Snow white fur, with an unnaturally large body size.

His gaze met hers. Ahenna was bleeding from the long cut on her face which went from her nose to her forehead. Once she looked into his eyes, she called out again

“Aaaawoo~”

The moment her command went out, the largest of the Dire wolves stood between Sungjin and her.

‘...She’s smarter than I thought.’

It will be difficult to complete this Raid Solo. Sungjin briefly turned to look at the other hunters. The hunters were all grouped up together with the ‘Hooligan’ shouting commands.

“Together Together!”

Then, the ‘Novice Swordman’ accidentally touched the ‘Hooligan’s’ shirt and lit it on fire. The ‘Hooligan’ jumped up in surprise quickly putting it out. He then cursed out at the ‘Novice Swordman’.

“Mother fucker! You wanna die, boy?”

“I... I’m so sorry!”

Sungjin shook his head in disappointment.

‘Wolves are better than Humans.’

Sungjin felt that asking for their help would be unfavorable and might cause even more headaches. He gripped his Katana tightly; he couldn't think of a way to reach Ahenna at the moment.

‘Let's start by decreasing their numbers a bit.’

Sungjin, changing his tactics, searched for a thinner section of the encirclement. But the first one to make a move was Ahenna.

“Argg”

With her short command, the wolves surrounding the Hunters attacked all at once.

“Fuck!”

The ‘Novice Swordman’ diligently swung his sword, but the fire on the sword eventually went out.

“Uhh...”

The moment he hesitated, the hand holding his sword was ripped off. Within seconds, he was torn apart to pieces.

The ‘Hooligan’ saw that the ‘Novice Swordman’s’ weapon went out, and understood his club would soon lose the enchant. He searched his pocket.

But the moment he paused to reach into his pocket, a Wolf pounced on him.

He hurriedly swung his club to hit the wolf, but another wolf charged from his blindspot. It jumped up and grabbed him by the neck in its jaws.

“Mother fu...”

He couldn't even finish swearing before his neck was ripped off by the wolf.

The ‘Novice Scout’ launched fire arrows all over the place, but his arrows only struck innocent trees. Once his protector the ‘Novice Swordman’ and the ‘Hooligan’ died,

“He...Help!”

He tried to run towards Sungjin, but was bit in the neck and killed. Sungjin genuinely felt sorry for them, but he wasn't available to lend a hand. The strongest of the wolves was busy attacking him. After exchanging a long series of blows,

“Awoawoo~”

Upon Ahenna's command, the wolves separated from Sungjin and backed off. When Sungjin looked around to search for the reason, he saw that there was a light in ‘Ahenna's Forest’.

The fire arrow from 'Novice Scout' had started a forest fire. Ahenna and her loyal wolves backed away from Sungjin and the fire and continued to encircle him from afar.

Surrounded by wolves and the fire, Sungjin was drenched in their blood. He took this chance to look around.

'So many...'

He cut down the wolves without rest. But their numbers never seemed to decrease. Whenever he would wipe out a large number of wolves,

"Awoooo~"

Ahenna would let out a cry which would summon an even larger number of beasts to her. It reminded Sungjin why this place was named 'Ahenna's Forest'. Sungjin asked the Operator,

"Operator, Time remaining?"

[14 minutes 29 seconds remaining.]

Killing the Orc Chief took him less than a minute, and Ahenna had already dragged out the fight by 5 minutes. After all, no matter how strong Sungjin was, he only had two hands and one Katana.

Recklessly charging into a well-coordinated formation of beasts was nothing short of suicide.

‘I really need to kill the boss first...’

Sungjin searched for the Queen. She was bleeding from her snout and forehead, and only glanced at him from time to time.

She instinctively knew she was no match for him.

‘How annoyingly smart’

It was as if she knew that she would win by dragging out the time. Sungjin, surrounded by the wolves, couldn’t help but recall the wandering merchant Aindell.

‘Maybe I should have bought a few Salamander’s ash...’

Sungjin had 180 coins left over. He had been so focused on saving coins for the late game that he might have penny pinched too excessively.

‘Consumables’

Now that he thought of it, he recalled that the necklace ‘Yanhurat’ was inside his pocket. Keeping the wolves at bay, he took the necklace out to inspect it.

‘Is it time to use this...?’

Yanhura’s special active effect was Zealot(III)

‘For 30 seconds, increase damage and speed by 300%’

Once the effects were over, his HP would drop to a third of what it was. But the effects were well worth the harsh penalty of the item. Sungjin, who was already abnormally powerful, would benefit immensely from using it.

But, he had seen the fate of those who had relied on the power of Zealot. Those addicted to Zealot had always met a bad end.

There were many who placed their bets heavily on Zealot’s active effects. Many who swore by it, forming the core of their strategy around its use. But those who became dependent on its effects someday couldn’t handle the penalty and faced gruesome deaths.

Sungjin held the necklace in one hand as he kept the Wolves at bay. Then,

“...Kill”

He heard an ominous voice originating from his palms. Sungjin looked from the corner of his eyes towards the necklace. The ‘Yanhurat’ stared back at him with a hideous smile.

The Necklace continued to whisper to him. To put it around his neck, to fight.

‘I didn’t want to use this...’

But as he deliberated his options, time kept on ticking by. He knew he could eventually overcome the sea of wolves and complete the objective, but the longer he took, the less time he had available to search and defeat the hidden boss.

‘I will kill the queen within the next 30 seconds.’

Coming to a conclusion, he swallowed his inhibitions and placed the necklace around his neck. The voices could be heard much more clearly now.

“Kill them”

Sungjin charged towards Ahenna with all due haste, ears filled with the mad whispers from the necklace. A wolf attempted to block his way. Sungjin easily cut through him.

Blood splashed onto his chin. The whispers from the necklace sped up by several times.

“Kill them, Murder them”

A gigantic Direwolf pounced upon Sungjin. The moment he

noticed the wolf, he cut it apart with lightning speed. Sungjin's blade moved even faster than usual.

The Dire wolf collapsed to the floor without even being able to let out a sound. Drawing blood twice, the necklace again picked up speed.

‘Kill them, Murder them, Rip them to pieces, end their lives!’

“Graah!”

A grizzly bear charged towards Sungjin, but with a single slash, the bear became slices of meat. The Voices grew louder and stronger.

‘Kill them! Kill them! Kill them! Kill them!’

Just hearing the necklace made his adrenaline pump wildly. His eyes felt as if they were threatening to pop out, and he unconsciously started grinding his teeth.

Sungjin made a beeline for the Queen. Innumerable beasts stood in the way to protect their Queen, but Sungjin in Zealot mode was three times faster and three times stronger. His speed and strength were like that of a hurricane, sweeping away his enemies in a rain of blood.

The beasts, who came in contact with his path of destruction were cut apart like pieces of paper. He cut and cut and cut. And all

the while, the maddening voice sped up without end.

‘Kill! Kill! Kill! Kill!!!!!’

“Aoooooooo~!”

Ahenna let out a voice full of fear, and all the wolves in the vicinity launched their attacks towards Sungjin to stop him. The sound of Ahenna’s cries and the voices from the ring overlapped.

‘Kill! Kill! Kill! Kill!!!!!’

And once the sounds overlapped, Sungjin couldn’t help but yell towards the endless stream of wolves,

“I’ll kill you all! You sons of bitches!”

Chapter 011 - Ahenna's Forest (4)

A tree was burnt to the core and transformed into charcoal. Unable to withstand its own weight, it collapsed into a pile of ashes. 'Novice Scout's' fire arrows had started a fully fledged forest fire; The wind carried embers of the inferno and began to spread across the whole of 'Ahenna's forest'.

But not a single creature could be seen running away from the flames; Sungjin pulled his katana out from the chest of the last wolf in the forest.

“Haa...”

Sungjin finally let out a long sigh. Behind him were mountains of corpses. Among the corpses was the 'Queen of the Forest' Ahenna herself.

Sungjin had fought in a frenzy. He had fought so wildly that he did not even recognize himself. The effects of Zealot was powerful, but it made it impossible to maintain a sound mind during the fight.

Sungjin ripped the 'Yanhurat' off of his neck.

‘Kill them! Rip them to pieces!’

The necklace's insane shouting seemed to continue to echo in his ears. He was unhurt during the fight, but he still felt a rush of

exhaustion wash over him.

“Operator, my HP”

HP: 500/1500

His HP had dropped exactly to a third of what it was. The item activation period was exactly 30 seconds. It was fine to fight mindlessly for 30 seconds, but the problem occurred when the period ended.

Disoriented, exhausted and with only a third of the total HP remaining, finding yourself surrounded by enemies... the same enemies you did not manage to defeat with three times the strength and speed. This was the reason why so many people who entrusted their lives to Zealot mode had succumbed to death.

Sungjin realized that in a truly life-threatening situation unless he had the absolute certainty that all hostile forces could be eliminated during the active time, it was better not to use it.

Against Ahenna, he could have easily completed the chapter without using it. But he was short on time.

‘Time’

“Operator, remaining time?”

[13 Minutes and 49 Seconds remaining.]

Not even a minute had passed since he had previously asked. ‘Yanhurat’s’ mind corrupting voice had saved him lots of time.

“Operator, take out two small Recovery potions from the inventory”

The cube summoned two small potions upon command. Sungjin drank them both. The effect of the small Recovery Potion was “fill 1/3 of the total HP”

Drinking the two potions recovered his whole HP. Sungjin now wanted to leave to search for clues about the hidden boss when

‘Snap’

He heard something step on a branch, breaking it.

‘Was one left alive?’

Sungjin looked towards the origin of the sound. Whatever caused the sound, it was trying to hide itself. Sungjin approached the tree, Katana at the ready. As he grew closer towards the source, he could hear the sound of breathing growing louder. When Sungjin walked around the large tree

“D...Die!”

A large axe came swinging at him. But it was swung at an ordinary speed. It was in slow motion compared to Ahenna's claws. Sungjin swung his sword faster than the axe to intercept it.

The Katana cut off the axe head, and the axe blade flew off into the distance, landing somewhere in the forest with a ‘thud’.

Disarming his attacker, Sungjin inspected the assailant. It was the white-haired ‘Lumberjack’ old man, who stood stiffly holding the headless axe like a sword.

“Ah...Ahhhh!”

He saw Sungjin's face and collapsed backward in fear. Sungjin stared for a moment at the old man.

‘...Oh yeah, I forgot about him.’

Aside from Sungjin, the old man was the only person who had been acting independently from the ‘Hooligan’ group.

He must have been put off by the ‘Hooligan’s’ arrogant behavior from the camp.

It was not a bad decision. In the end, it was what kept him alive. The Lumberjack swung his headless axe towards Sungjin and

shouted

“Stay...Stay away!”

He had no reason to approach the old man. Sungjin sheathed his katana. But the ‘Lumberjack’ added one more word.

“You... Monster...!”

‘... What?’

Sungjin looked into the old man’s eyes again. The old man must have seen Sungjin fight under the effects of ‘Yanhurat’. If that was so, his reaction made sense. Sungjin decided to give him an advice.

“Hey, Grandpa. Go back to the campfire where we started the raid and sit there. If you do so, you will be able to avoid death.”

With that, Sungjin ran deeper into the forest.

*

Sungjin ran through the forest with his katana in hand, searching for clues. But no enemies could be seen. Sungjin then realized something and asked the operator.

“Operator, Raid progress?”

[Raid is 95% complete.]

Sungjin immediately sheathed his katana.

‘I guess that was all of them back there’

Ahenna’s cries must have summoned every remaining beast in the forest to the fight. And every single one of them, without exception, was eliminated by his hands. It was rather nice to know that there were no loose ends.

It was just him and the ‘hidden boss’. After roaming the forest for a while, he saw rows of trees turning black.

‘This must be...the boundary line.

The raid was always conducted within a systematically enclosed area. Just because it was a forest did not mean it continued on forever. If a Hunter attempts to leave past the boundary, a terrifying warning was given.

[Please return to the hunting grounds. This area is off limits to hunters.]

[If you remain in the restricted area after 10 seconds,]

[You will die. 10, 9,..]

‘If this is the boundary...’

Sungjin withdrew his hands from the boundary line. Then turning around, he ran straight back perpendicularly from the boundary line.

No matter how much he searched his surroundings, he didn't see anything out of place. Soon, he returned to where 'Ahenna' and her beasts lay strewn about the forest floor.

'...Where the hell is the hidden boss?'

Sungjin decided to return to the starting location. At the campfire, the old man 'Lumberjack' and the 'Wandering Merchant' Aindell were sitting by the fire.

"Ahh! Monster!"

"Oh, you were able to defeat Ahenna. Congratulations, Mister Hunter."

Sungjin scanned the campsite briefly.

"Go...Go away!"

"Do you wish to purchase some supplies?"

The Lumberjack begged him to leave, and the Merchant bid him to stay. Of the two, he decided to listen to the Lumberjack. He

didn't have time to waste on those two anyways.

*

As time passed, the forest fire continued to spread. Ahenna's Forest was now lit as bright as day. But he didn't spot anything particularly out of place.

"Operator, time?"

[8 minutes and 39 seconds remaining.]

He had been searching fruitlessly for 5 minutes. He had been probing like a mad man, combing the forest. But the only thing he could find was the 'Boundary'.

'Where is it hidden?'

Sungjin was starting to become annoyed when

"Hoo Hoo"

Short but unmistakable sounds of an owl could be heard from above. Sungjin looked up into the night sky. If it were still dark, it would have been hard to spot it. But thanks to the forest fire, it was easier to see.

On top of a tree, an owl was nested. The owl did not appear to be a hidden boss, but it was still suspicious. Sungjin unhesitatingly jumped up the tree, climbing it.

Sungjin's Dexterity had long surpassed human limitations. Climbing the tree posed no difficulty for him. Once he got closer, the Owl flew away.

Only the nest remained. He decided to check the nest. Within the nest was not an egg, but a round white crystal.

‘...found it’

Sungjin reached out and lifted up the crystal. The Cube began an announcement.

[Congratulations! You have obtained the Hidden Piece]

[‘Perfect Moonstone’!]

Sungjin inspected the ‘Perfect Moonstone’. The Operator opened up a hologram for the item.

Perfect Moonstone – Crystal of the moon.

Rare Jewel

Crystal hidden inside an owl's nest.

It is said that it contains the powers of a full moon.

There are no special effects associated with this item. In most cases, this kind of item could be sold off to the Black Market for Black Coins.

“Operator, how much can this be sold off for in the Black Market?”

[100 Black Coins]

‘...only 100...’

Sungjin placed the item in his pocket for now. He left to search for the ‘hidden boss’.

Compared to the items Hidden bosses can drop, 100 Black Coins were nothing. Then, he stopped. He recalled something he heard long ago in the past.

From the earlier days of the hunts, he once heard from his teammate

“I heard that a party was able to find and kill the hidden boss in the ‘Ahenna’s Forest’”

Sungjin paused for a moment to try and recollect his memory.

“None of the original party members survived until now... but from what I’ve been told, the hidden piece found in the second forest... it’s not supposed to be sold.”

‘...Not for sale?’

Sungjin reached into his pocket and took out the moonstone one more time. As the name implied, it was perfectly round, and the crystal was a perfect replica of the full moon. Sungjin looked up into the sky.

Above the burning treetops and the smoke, he could see the third quarter moon. He looked back and forth between the moon and the stone.

‘Half moon... and round moonstone... that is to say, a full moon’

Sungjin, while looking back and forth between the crystal and the moon, he recalled the Operator’s explanation about the forest.

[It is a place filled with insidious and cunning predators of the night.]

The answer was on the tip of his tongue. All the pieces were there.

‘Then... just who is....’

Sungjin put together the final piece. He quickly moved his feet.

Chapter 012 - Ahenna's Forest (5)

At the campfire located at the entrance of the raid, two individuals were exchanging words..

“You mean you only lived in the city your entire life?”

“Yeah. I’ve never even held an axe in my life before. I don’t know what’s going on anymore...”

Old man ‘Lumberjack’ and the ‘Wandering Merchant’ Aindell were having a conversation.

“I see I see. I hope you have a long life, sir.”

“That would be nice... But that crazy guy from before...”

At that moment, ‘That Crazy Guy’ appeared, interrupting the peaceful atmosphere. Their reactions were polar opposites again. Wandering Merchant Aindell bowed, greeting him.

“Welcome, dear customer!”

And the old ‘Lumberjack’ was startled, pointing his fingers at Sungjin.

“Why! You! Why are you here?”

Sungjin, for the first time, approached the two. The ‘Lumberjack’ was being incredibly cautious, but he ignored the lumberjack and approached the Merchant instead.

“Hey, do you know anything about hidden bosses?”

Aindell tilted his head as if confused and replied,

“Hidden... Boss? I don’t know. Is there something like that here?”

He smiled innocently for a moment, and then his expression brightened up.

“Oh! I think I’ve heard of something like that before. A secret boss hiding somewhere in the raid zone. Finding it is really difficult... and it possesses incredible strength. Please be careful, Mr.Hunter, in case you ever run into something like that.”

Sungjin couldn’t help but smile when he heard the reply. And drawing out his katana, he pointed the sword at the Merchant.

“So you have incredible strength?”

As if not understanding his words, the merchant tilted his head again.

“What is this about, dear customer?”

The ‘Lumberjack’ grasped the merchant’s shoulders and said to him,

“Don’t listen to him, son. He’s a crazed monster. You don’t need to listen to him.”

Sungjin addressed the old man.

“Come to my side if you want to live. ‘The Crazed Monster’ is him, not me.”

The ‘Lumberjack’ seemed to be on Aindell’s side. The old man stood even closer to Aindell as he replied back to Sungjin.

“Stop your lies. ..Didn’t you see what happened when that ‘Hooligan’ fellow tried to threaten him?”

‘You don’t get coins. Give me everything you’ve got, Bitch.’

The Lumberjack was probably referring to that situation from earlier. The Operator definitely said at the time:

[Warning:]

[Attacking a non-hostile lifeform will cause penalties from the Raid Rewards.]

Sungjin knew better than anyone about this rule. There was no way he was not aware of this.

“...That only applies while he is a non-hostile lifeform.”

But the Lumberjack refused to listen.

“You bloodthirsty animal...”

He seemed to view Sungjin as a battle crazed maniac ever since witnessing him in Zealot (III) mode under the influence of ‘Yanhurat’.

Sungjin shook his head in disappointment. Almost nobody believed in Sungjin since the reset. At the very least, the old man seemed naturally distrustful.

“Well... fine. Do what you like. But, if you don’t run away by the time I count to three, I can’t guarantee your safety. One”

Sungjin put his hand inside the pocket and began to count.

“Two”

He gripped the ‘Perfect Moonstone.

“Three”

At the same time when he said ‘Three’, he tossed the stone towards Aindell.

“Hmm? What is...”

Aindell looked down at the stone he caught on instinct. In his hands, the crystal displayed the words ‘Full Moon’

And the moment his eyes landed on the words, his blue eyes turned amber. Sungjin knew,

‘... This is it.’

And to confirm his suspicion, the Operator announced in an urgent tone

[Warning!]

[The Hidden Boss ‘Werewolf Aindell’ has appeared.]

“Graaaah!”

Aindell’s short stature grew rapidly, growing hair all over his body, his face extending into a snout. His fangs grew out and extended past his lips.

The time it took for ‘Wandering Merchant Aindell’ to transform

into ‘Werewolf Aindell’ was 3 seconds. The ‘Lumberjack’ had fallen over in surprise at his transformation. Sungjin yelled at him.

“Hey, run away!”

But,

“Uh...”

He didn’t even have the time to scream or shout. Aindell, upon transforming, immediately turned towards the Lumberjack.

“Gah!”

The Lumberjack, who until moments ago was sharing a pleasant conversation with the Merchant, had his neck ripped out by the Werewolf Aindell.

Drenched in human blood, the Werewolf let out a howl.

“Awooooo~~!”

Sungjin frowned and took out his Katana from the sheath.

‘I’m getting real tired of that sound now.’

The Werewolf turned his gaze upon Sungjin. Sungjin clenched

his teeth. Moments later, they clashed.

Sungjin swung his sword and leaned his head back as Aindell's claws cut through the air above him.

Because Sungjin had tilted his head back to dodge, he could not visually confirm the result of the first clash. However, Sungjin did not feel any recoil from the strike.

‘He dodged it.’

Instead of launching a follow-up strike, Sungjin watched for the wolfman's next move. And just as he predicted, Aindell launched his attack towards Sungjin's unguarded left. Sungjin quickly let go of his katana from his left hand to guard.

“Kakakaka”

Aindell's claws and the chains of Free Ark collided, sending sparks flying. If he had not equipped the Free Ark, he would have lost his hand.

‘...deliberate and planned attack...’

Sungjin leaped back in surprise. In the previous strike, Aindell had aimed to strike Sungjin's arms to disarm him rather than go for the kill. There was no question about it. Sungjin decided to try to communicate.

“...What are you?”

And in a rough and deep voice, he replied.

“You already figured me out! What an interesting Human!”

Sungjin regripped his Katana as he spoke.

“I just thought it was strange, strange that the Operator would willingly throw in a random weirdo to help out in a raid.”

The Wolf gestured to the old man he killed and replied.

“That man was too old; his meat tasted no good. Let’s see how you taste!”

The two combatants resumed the battle. They dodged, attacked, dodged, swung... They exchanged blows at a breakneck speed. Aindell was even faster than Ahenna.

Despite Sungjin’s unmatched investment into Dexterity, Aindell did not lose out on speed. The two exchanged a few more blows, and mutually took a step back. The fight suddenly came to a pause.

Aindell and Sungjin both understood that the other was a formidable foe. Aindell looked nervous. Sungjin gazed into his own reflection on the Katana.

‘This was designed to be difficult to clear alone.’

Similar to “Mad Orc Ruark”, this was not a contest of strength and endurance, but of speed. The problem was compounded by the fact that the speed on both sides was roughly the same.

Sungjin considered using the ‘Yanhurat’ inside his pocket; 3 times the speed for 30 seconds.

‘...If I use this... It’ll take 30 seconds to kill...no, 10 seconds is enough... But... I promised myself I wouldn’t use it unless absolutely necessary...’

For a moment, Sungjin wavered, but he made a firm decision and withdrew his hands. Sungjin decided against using it. If he wasn’t strong enough to overcome a chapter as early as chapter 2 without relying on ‘cheat mode’, then his future looked grim.

“Kao!”

Aindell charged once more towards Sungjin. Sungjin lowered his stance and backed off, dodging and blocking all of Aindell’s attacks. Meanwhile, he calculated his next move.

‘If we reach that area...’

Sungjin leaped back further and further to lure Aindell in. Being

unable to land a hit, Aindell gave chase as he entered into a frenzy.

And suddenly, Sungjin stood his ground. He was standing next to the campfire. He kicked the logs up towards Aindell.

Fire attack. Aindell paused for the first time to stop the log. The moment he made contact, the fire spread to his fur.

For a thousandth of a second, Aindell stiffened up when the fire spread to his fur. And that brief moment of hesitation was all Sungjin needed. He cut the werewolf's unguarded abdomen from side to side.

“Kaaaa!”

Aindell let out a strange scream. It was difficult to make out whether it was a scream of a wolf or a human. But Sungjin's Katana was devoid of any mercy.

Sungjin swung and slashed Aindell's legs. His thin legs were severed without giving resistance. Sungjin had been eyeing them for a while.

Without being able to hold himself up, Aindell collapsed to the ground. He still tried to put up a fight by thrashing about from the ground, but Sungjin stomped on his stomach and simply cut off both of his arms.

“Kaaack!”

Aindell let out another cry of pain and began to pant. Even in his last moments, he glared at Sungjin with eyes filled with malice.

“How cruel...”

Sungjin held his Katana upside down and addressed him.

“Yeah, that’s the problem with you talkative ones.”

And he thrust the Katana deep in his chest.

“Krrraahggg...”

He let out one last cry of pain and perished. Sungjin looked down at him and said his parting words.

“You said it yourself. ‘Wild Beasts are afraid of fire.’ What kind of idiot teaches his enemies his greatest weakness?”

The Operator soon gave out an announcement.

[Hidden boss ‘Werewolf Aindell’ Cleared.]

[Congratulations! You have managed to complete all objectives in this Chapter!]

[Disregarding the remaining time and ending the raid immediately.]

Upon hearing the announcements, he finally wiped off the sweat from his brows.

“Sigh...”

Maintaining 100% completion for a raid, even for Chapter 2, was no easy task. Ahenna and Aindell both were extremely difficult opponents to defeat.

‘Will I be able to go until the end like this...?’

Once he thought of it, he understood the difference between this life and his previous life. The difference was his luck with teammates. The reason why he was struggling so much despite the massive advantage granted by the ‘Restart’ and his unbelievable stats was due to his luck with teammates.

Previously, he was able to make it to the end because he consistently met reliable and rational teammates. But for some reason he had absolutely the worst luck with his teammates this time.

Of all the teammates he met so far in two chapters, Officer Baltren was the only one who was somewhat decent.

Sungjin paused for a moment to look up at the night sky. The half moon was still there. Sungjin briefly thought of Baltren.

‘...I wonder how he’s doing.’

Baltren’s words echoed in his mind.

‘We will meet again, Master Hunter K.’

Meet again... The chances of meeting someone again from the previous raid was astronomically small. Baltren was reasonably strong and had good leadership qualities. But if he gets matched up with poor teammates, he’ll just get killed.

‘...’

And for a moment, Sungjin felt depressed. But, the Operator’s voice interrupted his thoughts and brought him good news.

[Calculating Rewards.]

Chapter 013 - Ahenna's Forest (6)

The Operator announced the rewards with her well enunciated and clear voice.

[Monsters Slain. Gray Wolf: 80. Shadow Puma: 30. Grizzly Bear: 15. Dire Wolf: 16. Total 1500 points.]

[Boss Monster Slain: Wolf Queen Ahenna: 150 points.]

[Hidden Boss: Werewolf Aindell: 150 points.]

[Final Point count: 1800. Distributing points.]

Reward distribution ended quickly. Why? Because there was only one recipient.

[Your contribution is 100.0%. 1800 Stat points, 1800 Black Coins awarded. Raid Clear Bonus 400 Stat points and 400 Black Coins awarded. Item effect 'Additional 10% gained' activated. Distributing 2200 Stat points and 2420 Black Coins.]

'100 Black Coins remaining from Chapter 1, 60 from Chapter 2 Tutorial, and now getting 2420... Total is 2580 Black Coins.'

Sungjin completed his calculations quickly and looked down at his hands. 'Heart of Gold's' Blue Sapphire glinted in the firelight.

Sungjin happily petted his ring. The ring allowed him to receive 10% extra coins this round.

[And now we will distribute the items.]

[Swift Paw – Wolf's step]

[Grand kin – Ahenna's last descendent]

[Mystery Pouch – Wandering Merchant's secret stash]

[Recovery Potion – Small X5]

[Salamander's ash X3]

Items appeared in front of his eyes and land in a heap. Except for three items, he put all the consumables in the cube.

[Last but not the least, you will be awarded titles you've earned on this raid.]

Sungjin crossed his arms and gazed down at the cube. He wasn't expecting much. He already had 'Master Hunter' which had the strongest stat boost he had ever seen.

'I don't think I'll need to switch out Master Hunter no matter what titles I receive from this Raid.'

But Sungjin's assumptions were thankfully wrong.

[Treasure Hunter – Twice during raids, You have rights to ask the Operator]

[For hints about where the secret location is or the hidden boss is located]

“What?!”

Listening to the Operator’s explanation, Sungjin immediately uncrossed his arms. He took the cube into his hands and asked the Operator once more.

“Say that again... What does the ‘Treasure Hunter’ title do?”

The Operator repeated herself.

[Treasure Hunter – Twice during raids, You have rights to ask the Operator for hints about the hidden locations]

“And... If I don’t equip the title?”

[If you do not equip the title, you will only receive half of the title’s effects.]

[In other words, you’ll be given the right to request hints on the hidden location or boss just once per raid.]

He had such low expectations, but he received a pleasant surprise. In fact, now he faced a dilemma.

Does he remain with Master Hunter’s 30% bonus to stats, or take two hints from the Treasure Hunter?

He is only allowed to pick one title to equip for the duration of the raid.

“Hmm... Ok understood.”

Sungjin decided to dwell more on it later. He could always mull over his choices while taking a bath in “Ninety Nine Nights”.

Sungjin finally looked over to his items. First was the boots built out of a Wolf’s foot.

‘I remember being jealous of people who wore these... How fortunate.’

This was Ahenna’s drop item. So Sungjin was able to see a few hunters wear it around.

Swift Paw – Wolf’s step

Heroic Shoes – Defense 22%

Active Skill

Swiftiness(III) – When out of combat, move at 1000% the normal speed for a brief period of time. 30 Seconds Duration
5 Minute Cooldown Time.

Shoes in the shape of a Wolf's Feet.

It normally has the claws hidden.

The shoes Sungjin wore now was the sneakers he had on when he was summoned to the Hunter's Hall. Sungjin lifted up the shoes and spoke the command.

“Equip”

Moments later, the shoes were placed on his feet. It fit him perfectly. The Active Skill would be useful when searching for the hidden boss or the secret piece.

The other two items were probably drop items of the hidden boss Aindell. The first one he inspected was the small wooden carving of a wolf.

Grand Kin – Ahenna's Descendent

Heroic Summon

Active Skill

Spiritual Link (Grand Kin) – Loyal Familiar, Summon Grand Kin.

If Summon is killed, or if 10 minutes pass from the time of summoning, it disappears.

‘...A summon...’

Sungjin threw the statue of the wolf into the air. It burst midair, and a normal sized wolf emerged. The summon looked handsome for a wolf.

Fur like untouched snow, eyes as beautiful as gems; he was without a doubt Ahenna’s descendent. Sungjin gestured towards Grand Kin.

“Grand Kin, come this way.”

The wolf obediently approached Sungjin. Sungjin placed his hands on Grand Kin’s head. The fur was soft to touch.

“... Oh yeah, I noticed that you wolves are much better than humans.”

In the two chapters he’s overcome so far, he’s had nothing but disappointing teammates. If he is a faithful familiar like the Operator claimed, then he will be useful in raids.

Sungjin spoke to himself while petting Grand Kin.

“But... Grand Kin is too long... Grand Kin... Grand... Kin... Cain? Yeah, I’ll call you Cain from now on. It’s okay right?”

Grand Kin responded with a short bark.

“Woof...”

It seemed as though the wolf understood all his words. Sungjin couldn’t help but smile.

“Yes, nice to meet you, Cain. I look forward to working with you later.”

The last item was a small rucksack. It was miniaturized, but the rucksack was otherwise identical to the one the ‘Wandering Merchant’ Aindell carried with him.

In truth, this rucksack was what Sungjin was most curious about during the whole “reward’ process.

‘Where is this used?’

“Operator?”

The Operator immediately opened up a hologram to reveal information about the rucksack.

Mystery Pouch – Wandering Merchant’s secret stash

Heroic Treasure

Active skill

Roulette (IV) – receive one ‘Legendary’ class crafting material.
Pouch Disappears after use.

Wandering Merchant Aindell’s stash of crafting materials.
His pouch is filled with crafting materials.

‘...Legendary crafting material?’

Sungjin was honestly surprised. The ‘Heroic’ tier he had equipped had excellent bonuses and effects, but ‘Legendary’ tier items were on an entirely different scale.

With a legendary tier item this early in the chapters, one could almost beat the whole chapter with just that item alone.

‘...Should I open it now?’

While Sungjin deliberated, the Operator announced the remaining time.

[You will return to the Hunter’s Hall in 1 Minute.]

He only had 1 minute left.

‘...Well, I guess there’s no harm knowing what I’ve got before I head into the Black Market.’

Finally making up his mind, Sungjin untied the rucksack and opened up the top.

‘Pop’

With a small sound, the Operator conveys a congratulatory message.

[Congratulations! You have obtained ‘Ancient Stories of the East’!]

“Wait... What?”

Sungjin was shocked. This ‘Ancient Stories of the East’ was a legendary item among legendary items.

Its effects were extraordinary. But it was difficult to obtain because the item was divided into three parts, and only one person could own the completed item.

Before Sungjin died, and only at the very last few chapters, he was able to see it once or twice.

Legendary Crafting Material

Omnibus of ancient stories of the east.

Once parts 1, 2 and 3 are gathered, it can be made into a complete volume.

‘If I can just recreate this item...’

If he were to obtain this item, early and mid chapters will become unimaginably easier to complete.

“Operator, how much are part 2 and 3 of ‘Ancient Stories of the East’?”

[I am unable to give you that information.]

For the first time, the Operator did not provide the information to Sungjin. He searched in his memories for a moment and recalled that in the ‘Black Market’ there was a bookstore.

‘I’ll probably be able to find some information there.’

The Operator began her countdown for his return to the hall.

[You will return to the Hunter’s Hall momentarily. 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0]

*

The Hunter's Hall was still filled with a large number of people. Less than 0.1% of all humanity were present, but humans were many. Unimaginably so.

But as chapters progressed, the numbers continued to dwindle. Sungjin recalled the past.

‘They kept on dying until there were less than a dozen remaining...less than...’

The operator interrupted his thoughts and announced a congratulatory message.

[Congratulations! You have all marvelously completed Chapter 2!]

Not one person celebrated the completion of the 2nd chapter. And rightfully so; until just moments ago, they were struggling for their lives to survive.

[You, who have completed Chapter 2, are now a fully fledged hunter.]

Sungjin crossed his arms and stared at the Operator's face.

‘...and here comes the bad news.’

[Chapters from now on will skip the tutorial]

[And jump straight into the raid.]

This sentence was exactly why Sungjin was cynical about her congratulatory message.

[There will be no more 1 vs 1 phases designed to get you familiarized with your upcoming enemies.]

[You will be entered into active combat straight away. All hunters who managed to survive until now are]

[considered to be above ‘able to fight 1 vs 1’ level,]

[So opportunity to safely scout out an enemy is no longer provided.]

“What...?”

Several hunters already figured out what kind of disadvantage this was, and let out sounds of disappointments. On the other hand,

‘Yawn...’

Sungjin stretched as he yawned. Tutorials did not affect him one way or another. The Operator continued on and on, and Sungjin paid her no heed.

[Please do not be alarmed by the discontinuation of tutorials.]

[A note with the information about the next raid]

[will be delivered to the inn “Ninety Nine Nights” shortly.]

The other Hunters listened to her words carefully; for them, it was a question of life and death.

Among them, only Sungjin stood crooked, arms crossed and complaining like some high school delinquent.

‘Shut up and send me to the Black Market.’

Chapter 014 - Black Market Second Shopping

After a long and exhaustive explanation from the Operator, Sungjin was finally teleported to the Black market.

[Once you have finished shopping, please feel free]
[to return to the “Ninety Nine Nights” Inn at any time.]

The Operator continued to speak, but Sungjin had had enough.

“I got it, Thank you,”

Sungjin waved the cube away and entered the Black Market.

‘...Bookstore... where was that again...?’

Sungjin had been to the Blackmarket innumerable times, but couldn’t recall the last time he had entered a bookstore.

There never was a really good reason to enter one. Sungjin roamed the Blackmarket aimlessly until he found a bookstore hidden away in a corner.

[This bookstore ‘Dry Mouth’ is run by bookkeeper Gourmet.]
[Various books and information can be purchased here.]

The shop owner was a quiet looking goat man. He was so absorbed in his reading that he did not notice that he had a customer waiting. Sungjin eventually let out a fake cough to attract his attention.

“Cough... hmmm.”

The Goat man finally noticed that he was not alone; only his eyes moved as he gazed up from his book. He saw Sungjin and greeted him.

“Ah, please excuse me for not noticing you there... I hope you can understand; this is a great paragraph you see... so, was there something you wanted to buy?”

Sungjin shook his head.

“No... I did not come to buy a book.”

Sungjin carefully took out the part 1 of ‘Ancient Stories of the East’ from his vest and showed it to Gourmet.

“...Do you recognize this book?”

Gourmet’s eyes grew wide in surprise.

“Oh... My goodness!”

His eyes took turns looking back and forth between the book and Sungjin.

“This is a very precious item... where did you manage to obtain one?”

Sungjin replied matter-of-factly.

“What do you mean? I obviously got it as a raid reward.”

Gourmet shook his head in disbelief and replied, licking his dry mouth.

“I thought chapter 2 just ended... how is it possible to obtain a legendary crafting material this early on?”

“...I didn't know it was possible either. So... do you carry any of the later parts of this book?”

“Hmm... Please wait for a moment.”

Gourmet closed the book he was reading and stood up. Behind him were mountains of books. Some were even taller than Sungjin.

He dug into the mountain and disappeared from sight. Once a minute had passed since his disappearance, the mountain seemed to collapse with books cascading down. After two major and chaotic book avalanches, Gourmet appeared holding two volumes.

In his hands were the ‘Ancient Stories from the East’ Part 2 and the ‘Ancient Stories from the East’ Part 3. Gourmet proudly announced:

“As I thought, I have them. So, have you come to purchase them?”

Sungjin instinctively swallowed.

“...How much are they?”

“5000 Black coins per Volume.”

Sungjin couldn’t believe his ears.

“What?”

“5000 Black coins per Volume. Did you already lose your hearing at such a young age?”

5000 black coins per each crafting material; it was expensive. Far too expensive.

“That means... the final item has the component cost of 15,000 Coins...”

“In my humble opinion, the complete item is incomparably more valuable than 15,000 Coins.”

Sungjin fell quiet. Gourmet was right. For now, he decided to leave the shop.

“...Understood. I will come again at a later date.”

He needed 10,000 Coins to purchase the two components. Haggling or intimidation did not work with Vendors.

“... If you want to read to pass the time before the next raid, feel free to browse. Any book unrelated to combat is free after all.”

Sungjin waved his hands and left Gourmet's bookshop. His destination: 'Ninety Nine Nights'. There was nothing he wanted to purchase. There were only two items that he yearned for.

‘I currently have 2580 Coins. My old sword is 9700 Coins...but the remaining two crafting materials cost 10,000 Coins...’

“Mister Hunter! Please look at my wares!”

A Vender shouted for his attention, but Sungjin paid no heed. He was deeply troubled by his dilemma.

‘Finish the book, or reunite with the old sword...’

Sungjin was short of about 7500 Coins needed to purchase either of the two items. He would need to complete at least two more raids to earn the required amount. Sungjin debated on which item to get first as he walked back to the ‘Ninety Nine Nights’ Inn.

*

Once he returned to ‘Ninety Nine Nights’, he found that a familiar friend was waiting for him at the table. It was the wolf ‘Grand Kin’. Cain barked once as if to greet Sungjin.

“Woof”

It was unexpected. But the Operator gave an explanation.

[Beings connected via ‘Spiritual Link’ skill]

[Will be available at ‘Ninety Nine Nights’ from now on.]

Sungjin welcomed the information. He didn’t feel comfortable with other people, but being able to spend time with a loyal companion like Cain had no demerits.

Sungjin walked up to Cain and petted him.

“Cain... Let’s go in and eat dinner or something.”

Sungjin entered ‘Ninety Nine Nights’. Owlbear Dalupin greeted Sungjin as always.

“Welcome back, Mister Hunter.”

He bowed deeply until his back was nearly level with the floor.

“Ah, thanks.”

“Awoo...”

Hearing an unfamiliar wolf voice, Dalupin turned his head around to look at Cain from his bowed position. Sungjiin was reminded that owl men could turn their neck around at 180 degrees.

“This Wolf...”

Sungjin answered casually.

“He’s my ally. Please take care of him when I am not around.”

“Understood, sir.”

Dalupin finally stood up straight and asked

“You must be famished. What would you like for me to prepare today?”

Sungjin deliberated for a moment.

“Sushi. Various kinds, about 20 pieces. Oh, and make about 5 fatty tuna.”

Dalupin nodded.

“Understood. I will prepare them right away.”

“Ah... And raw meat for Cain. A good cut of beef around 500 grams. It’s okay right?”

Dalupin nodded once more.

“Not a problem.”

*

Sungjin picked up the last remaining Fatty Tuna Sushi with his chopsticks. He had been saving it for last. He dipped the tip of the rice in soy sauce before putting it in his mouth.

The soft meat of the tuna, with the perfect ratio of fat mixed in... it, almost seemed sacrilegious to swallow such a perfectly prepared culinary masterpiece.

But eventually, the tuna was masticated and swallowed.

‘Should I order 5 more fatty tunas?’

Sungjin considered his options for a while. After carefully weighing his options, he decided not to. If he over indulges on food today, it could cause problems in the raid tomorrow.

Sungjin took a glance down once he was done eating. Cain finished his meal and licked his plate clean.

“I’ll see you tomorrow Cain.”

Sungjin petted Cain one more time and returned upstairs. He asked the Operator as he took off his clothes.

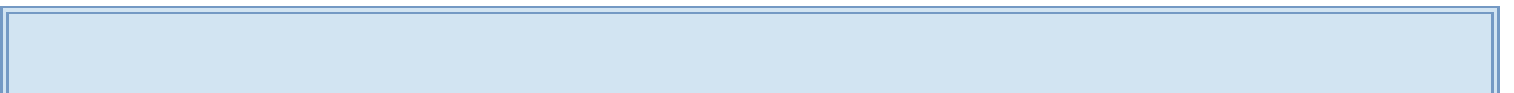
“Operator, Time left?”

[10 Hours 49 Minutes 21 Seconds until the next raid.]

Until the next raid, there were two things he had to do; Distribute his status points, and decide on a title.

Sungjin sank himself into the tub and called upon the Operator.

“What is my status right now?”



Title: Master Hunter

HP : 1500 MP : 220

Strength: 275 212 (+63)

Dexterity: 381 293 (+88)

Endurance: 150 115 (+35)

Magic Power: 18 14 (+4)

Mind Power: 22 17 (+5)

Unallocated points: 2200

‘2200 unallocated points after completing chapter 2... I don’t think my total stat points added up to 2000 after four chapters last time though...’

It was certainly an incredible amount. It helped that Sungjin took the majority of the contribution points from both Chapter 1 and 2, as well as clearing them at 100% completion.

‘I guess it’s because I did everything by myself...’

The most important question that needed an answer now was how to distribute his status points. After thinking about it carefully while idly splashing about in the tub, he decided to invest 700 into strength, 800 into dexterity, and 700 into Endurance.

The reason why such a high percentage of status points went into endurance was simple.

‘There will be mages starting with the next chapter.’

There were magical attacks that cannot be dodged no matter how dexterous you were. In order to clear a raid safely, investing in Endurance was necessary. Of course, investing so much into Endurance could lead to shortage in attack power, but

‘If I really need to, I could always rely on Yahurat to get me through rough spots.’

His next dilemma was what to do with the titles.

‘If I use Master Hunter, I receive bonus stats. If I use Treasure Hunter, the opportunity to find hidden pieces would increase...’

It was a difficult decision. After much thought, Sungjin finally decided to keep Master Hunter for one more round.

The reason was that it was such an excellent title. Even to the final chapter, Sungjin had never even heard of such a good title.

‘... I will decide on the Treasure Hunter after trying the active skill at least once. Couldn’t hurt to wait and see first...’

Sungjin finished his bath and wrapped up his thoughts. Fatigue from the battle today, and the subsequent relaxation at the bath made him drowsy. He felt drawn to the bed and laid himself on its

soft sheets. But...

‘Knock knock’

He heard a knocking at the door.

“Who is it?”

Dalupin answered from the other side.

“Dear Hunter, it is the information pertaining to the next Raid.”

‘I don’t need it though...’

But Sungjin opened the door anyway. He felt it was against etiquette to refuse gestures of kindness. Especially against Dalupin who provided him excellent meals and a place to lodge.

Once Sungjin opened the door, Dalupin handed him a piece of paper. Sungjin accepted the note and said

“Thank you.”

“Hope you have a restful evening.”

Dalupin closed the door and left. Sungjin took a glance at the piece of paper. It goes without saying that there was no hint

regarding the ‘Hidden Piece’.

Information mostly pertained to terrain, the different kinds of monsters dwelling in the area and about the boss that ruled the place. Ordinary things. Everything that Sungjin already knew by experience.

Sungjin placed the paper on his bedside table. The title was illuminated by the lamp.

‘Information pertaining to the Greysoul Cemetery’

But he turned off the lamp. While other hunters diligently studied the note, Sungjin laid on the bed and went to sleep.

Chapter 015 - Greysoul Cemetery (1)

Next morning, Sungjin made his way down to the 1st floor of Ninety Nine Nights.

“Toast, and Vanilla Latte.”

He ordered his breakfast.

“Woof”

And noticed Cain, whom he had forgotten about.

“Ah, that’s right. Give Cain something too.”

After ordering food for Cain, Sungjin took his feet out of his shoes and rested them on top of another chair. Dalupin left to prepare his breakfast.

While munching away on the toast and Vanilla Latte, Sungjin thought of the next raid, ‘Greysoul Cemetery’. He felt his appetite draining. He put down the toast he was eating.

‘That’s not really a place I wanted to return to...’

Sungjin put down his half-eaten toast and left the ‘Ninety Nine Nights’ with his cup of latte.

“Kyan”

Cain also, as expected, followed him out. The weather was beautiful. The ‘Black Market’ could be seen in the distance.

‘...Should I buy some Holy water now...?’

The thought ran through his mind. But he needed to save every black coin he could muster so that he may purchase a legendary item later on.

‘Operator, remaining time?’

[3 Minutes 12 Seconds.]

There was still some time left before the raid. Sungjin downed the rest of his Vanilla Latte and returned to the table he had his breakfast at. He decided to allocate his points the way he had planned last night.

“Operator, allocate 700 to Strength, 800 to Dexterity, and 700 to Endurance.”

[Strength has risen by 700, Dexterity by 800, and Endurance by 700 points.]

Sungjin was now prepared mentally for the upcoming raid. No

matter how high his status points were, it was no easy feat to finish the chapters at 100% completion.

Especially alone.

Soon, the Operator began her countdown.

[Raid will begin shortly. 10, 9, 8]

Sungjin pet Cain briefly.

“See you in a bit, Cain.”

And after a moment, he disappeared from Ninety Nine Nights.

*

Late at night, worn out street lamps dimly illuminated the surroundings, casting shadows upon the rows of tombstones nearby. A crow flies off of a twisted dried up tree devoid of leaf or life.

“Caw Caw~”

The place Sungjin was teleported to was an eerie Cemetery. The Operator began her explanations.

[Hello. Welcome to Greysoul Cemetery.]

[It is a place filled with regrets and grudges of the dead.]

[As announced before, starting with this chapter]

[There will be no more tutorials, and the raids will begin right away.]

‘....I can never get used to this place...’

Sungjin took a look around his surroundings and licked his lips. It still tasted sweet from the Vanilla Latte.

[Synchronizing Hunters.]

The space around Sungjin blurred for a moment, and four Hunters emerged. Sungjin read the titles before even looking at the teammates themselves.

‘Bear Hunter’, ‘Mid-level Samurai’, ‘Scout’, ‘Veteran Spearman’.

‘Oh~’

This time there were two impressive titles. ‘Mid-level Samurai’ and ‘Veteran Spearman’.

Sungjin inspected the owners of the two titles. Anyone could tell that the ‘Mid-level Samurai’ was a Japanese man.

He looked to be about in his early 20s, maybe even younger than the current Sungjin. He had grown out his chin hair and had shaved part of his eyebrows to make the tips pointy. Of China, Japan, and Korea, only Japanese men would sport such a look at such an early age.

‘I guess he’s a real Samurai.’

Sungjin took a look at the ‘Veteran Spearman’. This man was completely black.

Compared to black men in America or Europe, his skin tone was of an even darker shade. It was hard to make out his features due to the dim lighting, but the whites of his eyes were prominently visible.

‘...I think.... He’s African.’

The last two individuals lacked anything noteworthy about themselves. The ‘Bear Hunter’ was a tall westerner, and the ‘Scout’ was a thin, agile looking man. He guessed that he was probably from India.

Sungjin was checking the vibe of the group. If it was going to be awful, he wanted to tell them

‘Gather as four and go hunt small mobs’

Just like he had done with the others until now. But before he got his words out, the ‘Mid-level Samurai’ stepped forward and stole the show.

“Hey, you four should group up and hunt trash. I’ll go and solo the boss in a flash!”

The other four, including Sungjin, stared at the Samurai. Sungjin especially so.

The Samurai had invested well into his equipment. From top to bottom, he wore ‘normal’ to ‘rare’ items.

The Katana he held appeared fairly high spec. Probably an item sold in the ‘Last Edge’. Sungjin couldn’t help but think

‘He sure bought a lot of things.’

He must have been an ace in the other raids, carrying his team. The ‘Scout’ Indian man piped in.

“Well... isn’t it better if we...stick together?”

The ‘Bear Hunter’ agreed with the ‘Scout’.

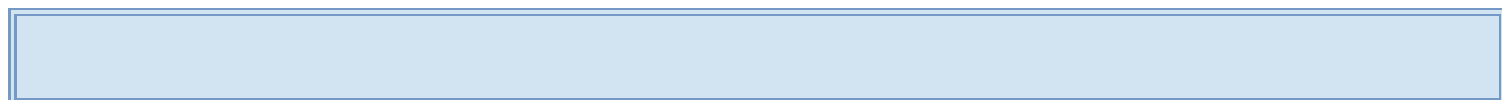
“Yes, I agree. Chinese kid, no matter how strong you are, wouldn’t we be stronger if we all worked together?”

With the exception of the ‘Mid-level Samurai’, the rest of the team seemed rather agreeable.

“Hey! Don’t you see the katana and the title? I am Japanese! Japanese! Anyway, sure, we can go together. But, when we face the boss, stand back. No matter how hard you try, I’m going to take the highest contribution.”

Sungjin reflected over his actions.

‘Was I... Like that...?’



Chapter 3 -Greysoul Cemetery Raid

Objective – Hunt the Lich ‘Deathmond’

Time Limit: 25 Minutes

[Complete the objective within the Time Limit.]

[If you cannot, you will die.]

[The Raid begins in 3 minutes.]

Once the Operator completed her mission briefing, the White ‘Bear Hunter’ said

“Well, I think we should introduce ourselves before we begin. We are going to be fighting for our lives, and trying to yell ‘Hey Master Hunter, help me!’ might take too long.”

The White man was looking up at Sungjin’s title above his head.

“I will start. My name is Henrik Sondegaard. Since my family name is long, please just call me Henrik. What are your names?”

Henrik must be from the Northern Europe.

“Kultu. I am from Nepal.”

The man Sungjin assumed to be from India was actually from Nepal. And finally the ‘Mid-level Samurai’.

“My name is Watanabe Hiroaki. Shorten my name and call me Hiro.”

‘What a lively youth.’

Until now, he should have been through life and death struggles, forced to kill or be killed, yet he maintained such a positive attitude. He must be like this naturally.

The only two remaining men who didn’t reveal their names were the ‘Master Hunter’ Sungjin and the ‘Veteran Spearman’. Once the three men stared at him, Sungjin spat out words he had prepared beforehand.

‘I am K.’

Henrik nodded.

“Ok. Kei.”

He must have liked that his name was short. The last one remaining was the ‘Veteran Spearman.’ But he only stared blankly. After he had taken turns looking at the others, he said

“Akanna”

And thus the introductions were over. The ‘Bear Hunter’ Henrik did his best to rally the team and exert leadership.

“Let’s work hard together. Don’t we all have a family we wish to save?”

The ‘Mid-level Samurai’ gripped his hands hard at Henrik’s words.

“Yes. My mother and sister are being held by them...”

Sungjin thought Hiro was perhaps not as crazy as he first seemed. The Nepali Kultu also nodded.

“I probably have the largest family to save. Since there are 30 members in my immediate family.”

Once again, Sungjin and the African were the last ones left. Sungjin, in particular, didn’t have anything to say; He grew up in an orphanage. The people the Operator showed him as a ransom for clearing the raids were just some orphanage workers.

They were good people, but it was nothing like a parent. No one knew what Akanna thought. He only blinked his eyes with a vacant stare. He did not speak up.

It wasn’t like he couldn’t speak, nor unable to understand. He

didn't seem normal.

[The Raid begins in 1 minute.]

The Operator informed the group about the remaining time. Now, the other men became nervous.

“You read the information pamphlet, right? Arrows don't work against Skeletons. I will deal with the skeletons with my axe, so please take care of the zombies and ghouls if I am busy.

“Understood.”

Hiro approached Sungjin meanwhile.

“Hey, Kei, what country are you from? You're definitely not Japanese. Chinese? Korean? Probability wise, you're most likely to be Chinese, but I feel like you might be Korean.”

Hiro might have been interested in Sungjin for choosing the same weapon. Sungjin continued to stare expressionlessly, but Hiro did not stop there.

“Wait, you're still using the basic katana! Where did you spend all of your Black Coins? And what is that shackle for? Why are you swinging your sword while being bound with chains?”

Sungjin frowned.

‘...Annoying.’

Even though Sungjin did not give a single word in reply, Hiro continued to speak.

“I actually finished 1st place in Kendo Regional Championship in Osaka. After taking the regional title, I was preparing for the Nationals, but I ended up here instead.”

That last part sounded interesting. Sungjin had also taken Kendo. If he had taken first place in Osaka, he must have had considerable skill. So Sungjin gave a single word of reply.

“So... that’s how you got the title of Mid-Level Samurai.”

“Yeah! This Operator or whatever has good eyes. This Title is awesome. It gives 20% increased damage to all attacks done by a Katana. How is it? Amazing isn’t it?”

Sungjin was at a loss for words. He wanted nothing less than to quickly kill the boss and search for the hidden boss.

“What’s that title, though? Master Hunter? It sounds really cool. What are the effects?”

Sungjin sighed.

“...Go get it. You’ll know then.”

“Yeah, I’m going to smash this Raid or whatever! I’ll take all the titles and all the items!”

His confidence was great. But his contribution from this particular raid wasn’t going to be high at all. Unless Sungjin decided not to participate.

‘How should I proceed with this raid?’

Sungjin took a quick glance at the others. These were all somewhat talented individuals with potential. At their level, they should be able to survive this chapter without protection.

‘Problem is contribution...’

But the most important factor is ‘who are the last few survivors at the end’. There was no reason to be considerate with every random stranger he meets at the beginning.

Because the chances of them surviving to the end was minuscule. The only ones who are needed to complete all raids and objectives are the final few individuals.

To eliminate uncertainty caused by having to rely on good teammates and cooperation, he needed to be overwhelmingly powerful. Enough to finish all the raids solo if need be.

Sungjin decided on his course of actions. And just like he had done every time, he let the others know.

“I... Will go alone.”

And as was with Hiro, the others turned to look at him.

“Truthfully, I am more of a lone wolf. If there is any need of my assistance, I will come to help. Please...stick together as a group of four and hunt only the normal monsters.”

Henrik, who tried hard to encourage teamwork, was shocked.

“What? What’s wrong now? Why are you saying this?”

Kultu also chimed in.

“He’s right. Isn’t it better to hunt together?”

Hiro was actually impressed.

“Ho... Kei. How cool. Alright! It’s a race!”

Finally, the Operator began her countdown.

[The Raid begins in 10 seconds. 10,]

Sungjin took out his Katana, and stood in front of the gates of ‘Greysoul Cemetery’.

[9, 8, 7]

Henrik tried one more time to change Sungjin’s mind.

“Hey Kei, don’t do this. Let’s talk about this.”

But Sungjin only turned to say

“I can’t. This raid... It’s like this.” (TL NOTE: at the bottom for context)

Henrik’s eyes grew wide. Sungjin felt pangs of guilt.

“Just... consider me a troll. You probably had one or two until now.”

[3, 2, 1, 0]

And the moment the gates opened, Sungjin ran ahead. Alone.

TL NOTE:

This part is REALLY SUBTLE. In the Korean version, this sentence implies that betrayal is part of the raid's design; One person sacrificing the entire group to take all the reward for himself. He's basically apologizing to Henrik for screwing him over for the next round.

He considers his own action as a direct threat to the well-being and survival of his teammates in the next round; Same as if he attempted to kill them himself. Hence, he considers himself a 'Troll'.

Chapter 016 - Greysoul Cemetery (2)

Once Sungjin was gone, the remaining four people decided to work together as a group.

“Yeah, just leave it to me. I got this!”

Hiro was too talkative.

“...”

Akanna was too quiet. But regardless of their differences, they agreed to stick together to clear the graveyard.

In the front stood Henrik with his axe and Hiro with his Katana. In the middle stood Akanna with his spear, and in the back stood Kultu with his bow.

Before entering the cemetery, Henrik and Kultu both took out the Lantern they had prepared.

“What’s that?”

Henrik answered matter of factly.

“What, this lantern? It was on the information page you know. It says the Cemetery is dark so you should buy a lantern at the Black Market.”

Hiro tilted his head.

“Is that so?”

Akanna also blinked with a blank expression. Henrik shook his head.

“Mine in the front and Kultu’s lantern in the back, we’ll probably be okay with the lighting. Let’s just go.”

Henrik made his way towards the cemetery. Some time later,

“Grrah!”

Few zombies appeared.

“Zombies!”

“Alright!”

Hiro fearlessly ran ahead.

“Wait...!”

Henrik had been planning on watching his enemies and

responding defensively. Hesitantly, he ran forward to assist Hiro. However, Hiro proved to be better than he thought.

He wielded his blade as if possessed. Once the zombies reached his strike zone, their arms and legs were cut off and sent flying. When the zombies stumbled and fell due to the loss of their legs, they were beheaded with a lightning fast attack before they even hit the ground. Henrik instinctively swallowed.

‘I see why he’s acting so cocky.’

While he was distracted, a Zombie charged at him. Henrik hurriedly swung his axe instinctively and cut off the zombie’s wrist without resistance.

But this became a problem. A living being would have hesitated from pain, but the Zombie continued to charge at Henrik disregarding the physical harm.

Henrik, having just finished his attack motion, was in no position to defend himself. He was vulnerable to the zombie’s bite. A moment of peril.

“Aho!”

Akanna’s long spear penetrated the zombie’s head through its face.

“Iho!”

Whenever Akanna thrust his spear shouting out strange words, holes appeared on a zombie's face.

The zombies hit in the face by his spear all fell powerlessly on the spot without being able to so much as wave their arms. Thanks to the spirited fighting by the two men, Henrik and Kultu did not have much to do.

“Orya!”

“Kaho!”

All Henrik and Kultu could do was provide light for Hiro and Akanna to fight properly.

“Alright, Henrik! Bring the light a little closer please!”

At least Hiro actually needed the light to fight.

“Ahoho!”

Akanna would run into the impenetrable darkness alone, and kill the zombies on his own.

“What the hell am I watching”

Henrik, who had lived in Copenhagen all his life, had difficulty adjusting to what he was witnessing.

But thanks to the effort of the other two men, Henrik and Kultu could progress through the raid without much trouble.

Sometimes ghouls, which were faster than zombies, would threaten Henrik and Kultu. But whenever they were in danger, Hiro and Akanna protected them from harm.

Henrik thanked the two of them.

“Thanks to you two... I think we will be able to clear this raid without much trouble. Of course, we would have to see the boss first to know... but from what I could see, we should be enough. The real concern is that teenager Kei from earlier. I worry about what might have happened to him.”

However, Hiro's expressions were strange. Hiro spoke as if he was put off by something.

“Yeah, I guess so... But isn't something weird here? This Round?”

“What's weird?”

“I mean... well, I guess something like...the number and strength of the monsters... Don't you feel that somehow it's even easier than Ahenna's Forest?”

Kultu agreed with his observations.

“I think you're right. Compared to the endless wave of wolves from the previous raid, there does seem to be too few enemies in this raid. There are Ghouls too... but bears were far more threatening. Is it because we haven't entered too deep inside yet?”

“Ig”

Akanna interrupted the conversation by making strange noises. Henrik looked over to him.

“What is it Akanna? Do you have something to say?”

Akanna wordlessly motioned for Henrik's lantern. Henrik understood his gestures and obediently handed it over. But the question remained.

“Akanna, you... I thought you didn't need light to see?”

“Ig Ig”

Akanna left the other three and ran off somewhere. He then stopped and put down the lantern on the ground. The other three

men opened their mouths in surprise.

“What the...”

Not far from where they had fought, there was an unimaginable number of zombie and ghoul corpses lying around. Henrik walked up to Akanna to pick up his lantern. He looked around the area with the lantern held low to the ground.

There he found not only corpses of ghouls and zombies, but also chopped up remains of skeletons as well. Henrik murmured to himself, overwhelmed by the implications.

“What in the world...”

*

Sungjin wielded his katana like a bolt of lightning.

“Kueueu~”

In a single strike, two zombies were cut down at once. The blood and bile splashed all over Sungjin’s face.

‘Krraaa Graahh’

Smelling the thick scent of blood, ghouls appeared from

nowhere. Deeply bent back, jagged and uneven teeth, rotting flesh.

Sungjin instinctively swung his katana. Anything that his sword touched was cut apart without resistance. Of course, spewing disgusting unidentifiable liquids everywhere.

‘...’

There were largely two main complaints about the ‘Greysoul Cemetery’. One was that the enemies were smelly and gross; mostly zombies and ghouls.

The second was that these things were only dangerous when overrunning their opponents with sheer numbers. Although they did not pose any significant threat to Sungjin, fighting them was in no way hygienic.

‘I can’t wait to clear this map.’

It was already his second time, but he couldn’t get used to this. Hidden piece or not, he just wanted the raid to end.

Once he finds a red magic circle hidden within the cemetery, he will be able to locate the boss monster ‘Deathmond’. Kill the boss with all due haste, and search for the Hidden Piece. That was his plan.

‘...where was that again?’

But he couldn't remember where the magic circle was located. Greysoul Cemetery was far too dark, so dark that it was hard to tell where anything was.

Last time, the five of them roamed the cemetery aimlessly until they accidentally stumbled onto the magic circle and just barely beat the boss within the time frame.

‘...Maybe I should have bought a Lantern...’

Without a doubt, the information pamphlet about ‘Greysoul Cemetery’ would have urged the Hunters to purchase at least one Lantern.

He, once again, penny pinched too hard to save money to buy legendary tier items later on. Recalling something, Sungjin called upon the Operator.

“Operator.”

[Yes, esteemed Hunter?]

“Take out the Salamander’s ash that I received as reward last time’

A package appeared on top of the cube on command. It was a reward he had received from ‘Ahenna’s Forest’. Sungjin lifted it

up.

Salamander's ash

Normal Consumable item

Special Effect: Flame(I)

Flame(I) – imbues an item with a weak flame. 5 Minute duration.

Ash collected from a dead fire lizard, Salamander.

It is said that there is a place in the world where Salamanders are raised on a farm to be harvested for their ash.

Sungjin rubbed the ash over his Katana. Soon, Sungjin's weapon lit up on flames illuminating the surroundings.

‘...useful.’

It was an item originally meant to be used to strengthen attack power, but Sungjin treated it as nothing more than a source of light.

His damage was already high enough. Selling the Salamander's ash only gave back a single Black Coin. With the five minute duration, he was confident that it was plenty of time for him to find Deathmond.

‘Clack clack’

Perhaps it was due to the burning Katana that an army of

Skeletons was marching towards him. Sungjin preferred these guys though; at least they didn't have rotting flesh and blood.

Instead, they each carried spears, swords, or axes. And it goes without saying that they were no match for Sungjin's speed.

Wielding the Katana in one hand and the scabbard in another, Sungjin fought as if performing two-handed sword style combat. Cutting and bashing.

No matter with what Sungjin hit, he shattered the bones to pieces. Once the enemies were destroyed, Sungjin paused to look up at the night sky.

The moon was nowhere to be seen. He had no sense of directions. He didn't know where he came from or where he needed to go.

‘... I don't know where that Magic circle is... what should I do?’

Sungjin pondered for a moment before coming to a plan of action; brute force everything and search as wide and as quickly as possible.

If he ran into enemies, then it was a place he hasn't been to, and if it was an area filled with corpses, then it was a place he had searched before.

Although Sungjin was sick and tired of creating mountains of zombie/ghoul corpses, he decided to swallow back his disgust and

do it all over again.

*

“Did that... Kei person, do all this by himself?”

Henrik asked in disbelief. Hiro replied

“Who else could it be?”

Hiro sounded angry.

“Well, I guess it is a good thing as long as we clear the raid, right?”

Henrik consoled him, but Hiro kept his arms crossed and remained quiet. It appeared as though he felt some sort of rivalry between Sungjin and himself.

The four hunters fought with the ‘survivors’ as they searched through the ‘Greysoul Cemetery. When suddenly

“Eh?”

Akanna stopped on the spot. He could see far into the darkness. The others tensed up, but he put down his spear

“Amero Hum manieh damondi!”

He fell to his knees and started bowing feverishly. The others looked over to see what he could be bowing to. There, they saw a person in the distance clad in a white dress.

“Eek! EEEE!”

Hiro started screaming like a woman and hid behind Henrik.

“What... what’s wrong?”

Hiro answered Henrik’s question.

“G...Ghost!”

Henrik looked over again. He saw the white-clothed person. Pale face, long hair, white dress. She was approaching them.

But her motions were too smooth. When he looked carefully, he saw that there were no feet under the hems. Henrik tried to encourage Hiro.

“We should f..fight then!”

Hiro held onto Henrik’s clothes and murmured

“G...ghosts are scary!”

Akanna continued to pray and chant.

“Raome kani Besemeres”

Henrik was starting to panic. The two aces of the team showed zero will to fight and were behaving strangely.

Henrik looked over to the ghost again. Even now, the ghost without legs was gliding towards them.

Chapter 017 - Greysoul Cemetery (3)

Henrik raised his axe and shouted

“Kultu!”

“I got it!”

At least Kultu was still acting sane. The ghost approached very slowly. Kultu nocked his arrow and carefully aimed for the ghost's head. Pulling back on the string, and then letting go of the arrow, he let it fly.

‘Pew’

The Arrow flew straight and true. But when it reached the ghost, it simply passed through it.

“... Damn it, what are we supposed to do....?”

Henrik looked around him briefly.

‘I’m so scared!’

Hiro continued to cower behind him, hanging on to the hem of his shirt.

“LabeH Ahondi Russo oh”

Akanna continued to chant and bow

“What should we do?”

Kultu stared at him, terrified. There was no one dependable. Henrik looked ahead again. The female Ghost was now nearly upon them.

Henrik tightly gripped his axe. It was the only thing he could depend on. Pale face, crimson lips, bloodshot eyes. For a moment, Henrik and the ghost stared at each other.

“Huh...”

Henry had been planning to swing his axe as soon as the ghost approached close enough. But once he looked into the ghost’s eyes, he froze up. He found that he could not move.

The ghost stopped moving closer as well. She raised one arm,

‘Hyaaaaa...’

And let out a strange noise.

‘...Come on, move!’

Henrik commanded his body to defend itself, but he couldn't shake off the petrifying terror taking over his body. But after a few seconds,

The Ghost turned around and left in the direction she pointed.

Once she disappeared, Henrik was able to move again after a moment. Finally, he let out a sigh of relief.

“What was that?”

“Is it gone?”

Kultu answered Hiro's question.

“Eh? It's just leaving without doing anything?”

Once the ghost left,

“Emma Gordi Sabath”

Akanna stopped chanting and stood back up.

Everyone else turned to look at him. And for the first time, Akanna spoke words they understood.

“Thank you, blessed ancestor!”

Henrik was shocked and blurted out

“What? Akanna can speak!”

Akanna closed his mouth in response and blinked few times. Henrik was at a loss for words. Kultu spoke up.

“Excuse me, but since the ghost is gone... let’s get moving again. It’s been about 10 minutes since the raid began. Shouldn’t we go and clear it?”

Henrik snapped himself awake and fixed his grip on the lantern.

“Y...yeah... I guess that ghost was not a monster.”

The four men quickly moved from the spot. They did not wish to remain long where the ghost had appeared. But...

“Awooo~”

They heard a wolf’s cry in the distance. It was a sound none of them wanted to hear again after completing chapter 2. Hiro said

“Wait... was that a wolf?”

Kultu also tilted his head and asked

“There are wolves in the cemetery?”

Henrik bit his lips. This chapter had too many surprises. He didn't know what to expect.

*

Sungjin searched feverishly through the Greysoul Cemetery. Already 'living' monsters were becoming difficult to find.

In other words, he was running in circles. But he didn't have any other choice; it was so dark in Greysoul Cemetery that it was difficult to tell right from left.

Finally, the flame on the katana went out; 5 minutes had elapsed. Sungjin was plunged into the oppressive darkness once more.

‘Wait, 5 minutes passed already? I don't have much time...!’

Sungjin called the Operator out of instinct.

“Operator.”

[Yes?]

“Give me....”

He was about to ask for another Salamander’s ash when he remembered that he had Cain.

‘Ah...right...’

[Please go on]

“Ah, nevermind.”

Sungjin reached into his pocket to retrieve a small wolf figurine. He threw it in the air.

Before reaching the ground, the small figurine transformed into a large wolf. Sungjin couldn’t help but smile looking at Cain.

‘Wolves have superior night vision.’

Cain, who made an appearance for the first time in a raid,

“Awooo~”

Let out a long drawn out howl to announce his presence. Sungjin walked up to Cain.

“Cain, it’s too dark for me to see properly. Lead me in the way. We’re searching for an altar with a red pentagram. Understood? It should resemble a pile of rocks.”

Cain let out short barks to convey that he understood.

“Woof woof”

“Search for corpses... not the unmoving ones on the ground, but the ones that are still moving. Seeking out surviving enemies should lead us to the boss.”

Sungjin tried to explain in detail, but Cain had already begun his search. Sungjin followed behind Cain’s wagging tail.

After a while, Cain stopped and bared his teeth.

“Grrrrr...”

He let out a warning.

“What did you find, Cain?”

Sungjin caught up with Cain, and from afar

‘Creak click’

He could hear the sounds of ghouls and skeletons. Enemies. The numbers were great. Cain must have growled to warn Sungjin of what's ahead. Sungjin drew out his Katana.

*

“Sigh... No enemies...”

Hiro complained about the lack of enemies to fight. Henrik agreed with him.

“Yeah...”

Henrik preferred safety over recklessness, but Hiro was right. Once in awhile, the group would run across some bones or rotting tissue, but they were always found to be ripped apart to pieces.

And while wandering around bored, the four Hunters heard another strange noise.

‘Shing! Woof! Kaaack!’

It was a sound of conflict. The hunters’ gazed towards the source. Henrik looked at each of the other hunters and asked

“... should we go check it out?”

No one refused. Since the run-in with the ghost, they had not seen a single enemy alive. They headed towards the source of the conflict.

“...Peerless Warrior...”

Akanna said his second coherent sentence. The hunters raised their lantern high and continued to walk towards the commotion.

And soon, they were able to see Kei fight. He, who wielded his katana with speed and power that rivaled bolts of lightning.

Each swing of his blade cut apart three or four zombies.

Ghouls attempted to launch surprise attacks from his blind spot from time to time, but Sungjin seemed to have eyes on the back of his head; he would stop them with his scabbard and bisect them with his katana's follow-up attack.

“Krrruughaaggg”

In the face of Sungjin's mighty blade, Ghouls were cut away like pieces of paper.

A skeleton attempted to stab Sungjin with a spear, but Sungjin dodged it easily by leaning back. And

“Kaa!”

The skeleton was knocked down by the wolf. The Skeleton struggled for a moment on the floor, but the wolf ripped it apart with its claws.

“Wow...”

Henrik whispered in awe. Hiro was good, but when judged as a human being.

What he witnessed in Kei's fight was beyond the level of a mere human being; It was like watching a War God of old.

‘Hiro.’

Henrik remembered Hiro and turned to look at him. Hiro was watching the fight with his mouth agape as well.

‘I wonder what he's feeling right now.’

And by the time he finished his thoughts, the commotion ended. The sound of fighting stopped, and Henrik looked over to Sungjin. He was surrounded by nothing but undead corpses.

Kei frowned as he wiped off the blood and gore from his katana. The wolf next to him turned to look at them briefly before barking.

“Awo.”

Kei finally turned to look at the four hunters.

“Ah... You’ve come.”

But

“Grrr”

The wolf next to him bared its fangs threateningly. Kei noticed and chastised the wolf.

“Hey, don’t do that Cain. These hunters are not enemies.”

At his words, the Wolf relaxed and walked in between Sungjin’s legs. He was tame and loyal to his master. After telling off his wolf, Sungjin looked up.

*

Sungjin quickly did a head count.

‘One, two, three, four,’

Evidently, no one died. No one seemed particularly injured. He didn’t have a chance to see, but most likely the Veteran Spearman and the Mid-Level Samurai had protected the group well.

“It is a rather talented group.’

Unbeknownst to him, the main reason for their safety was that nearly all the monsters were annihilated by his hands. The North

European standing at the front approached him and began to speak.

“That was amazing back there, Kei.”

Sungjin welcomed him.

“I am glad that all of you are fine.”

“I couldn’t believe how skilled you were... Enough to survive alone.”

“Ah, thanks.”

Sungjin glossed over his praises. There were more important things to discuss. He pointed out the pile of rocks forming an altar.

“So... I am about to go for the boss... What would you like to do?”

It was the Magic Summoning circle used to summon “Lich Deathmond”. It was discovered by Cain while searching through the darkness.

The North European man saw the altar and tensed up. The Japanese boy next to him stepped forward.

“What do you mean? We fight.”

The African man behind them continued to stare with a blank face.

The Nepali behind the whole group seemed anxious. Sungjin directed his words to him

“Well, I won’t ask you not to participate. But even I can’t fight and protect at the same time. If you don’t feel like you can handle it, please feel free to drop out of the fight. In fact, it’ll be okay if you don’t participate at all, I can clear the raid for us.”

The boss ‘Lich Deathmond’ was a troublesome enemy; he used magic attacks. Many strong individuals had met their sudden demise by his magic.

At his words, the North European Henrik and the Nepali Kultu stepped back. Only three remained.

Sungjin, the Japanese teenager Hiro, and the African Akanna. Sungjin quickly glanced over them.

‘Well... at the very least they’re not at a level where they would do more harm than good.’

Sungjin stood in front of the altar. On top, a satanic pentagram was drawn.

Arranged at its center, were ribs and pelvic bones emitting blue lights.

“Hey Samurai, There should be some blue glowing bones laying around. Go get them for me.”

Hiro silently gathered the bones as Sungjin asked. Sungjin also searched and found three blueish bones.

Right Femur, Right Humerus, and the skull. The Samurai brought the Left Humerus and the Left Femur. Sungjin pointed towards the Magic circle and explained

“Arrange those on the pentagram over there. The body forms the center, so place those two bones on the left side. You understand, right?”

And as instructed, the Samurai placed the bones on the left side of the ribs and pelvic bone.

Sungjin followed suit and placed the right Femur and Humerus on the pentagram. He paused for a moment before turning to the other two hunters.

“Get ready, Mid-Level Samurai and Veteran Spearman.”

The two men nodded slightly. Sungjin placed the last piece, the skull, on the pentagram.

The Red Magic circle lit up, casting shadows all around. The bones began to reattach themselves to each other. The Operator gave out an announcement.

[Warning! Boss Monster]

[Lich 'Deathmond' has appeared!]

Chapter 018 - Greysoul Cemetery (4)

With Ribs and Pelvic bone at the center, the Skull, Scapula, Humerus, and Femur attached themselves to the existing skeletal structure.

Once the bones settled in their proper locations, smaller bones such as the fingers and toes came to attach themselves to existing pieces, soon forming the shape of a human.

Blue strands emerged from the skull and entangled the bones, and a staff emerged from the top of the altar and flew into its hands. The jaws began to move.

“...Come, those who are fated to die”

As soon as he spoke, Sungjin who had been waiting with his Katana drawn, charged at him.

Lich ‘Deathmond’ was a mage. To combat enemies who used magic, it was essential to attack them with all due haste before they could complete their incantations.

Seeing Sungjin move, the Lich lifted up his left hand and shouted

“Frozen wall, to me! Ice Shield!”

A blue crystal wall appeared in front of Sungjin. But Sungjin cut

down the wall without hesitation.

The wall of ice split in half and fell apart. The Lich quickly tried to swing his right arm holding the staff but

“Kaan!”

Cain leaped up and bit the staff, holding on. Taking advantage of the opening created by Cain’s surprise attack, Sungjin quickly swung his blade.

Caught off guard, the Lich’s left arm was cut apart to pieces and sent flying.

“Gasp...”

The Lich floated up slightly and leaped back. Sungjin wanted to press in to continue the attack, but the Lich began chanting.

“Push away my enemies! Gust!”

The Lich’s short incantation was followed by a powerful gust of wind. There was no damage, but Sungjin who was in the air, was carried by the wind and pushed away from the Lich.

At the same time Sungjin landed on his feet, Hiro launched his attack on the Lich’s right arm.

“Ice Shield.”

The Lich summoned another Ice wall. Hiro tried to cut through the block of ice like Sungjin had before him.

With a crack, the Katana clashed with the wall, but the cut was too shallow. Hiro’s Katana stopped halfway through the ice.

“What?”

Hiro shouted out in surprise. The Lich took the time to cast another spell.

“Piercing spears of ice! Ice Lance!”

The Lich’s staff formed three icicles in the air around it. Once they took shape and solidified, the icicles flew towards Hiro who was still struggling to free his Katana from the Ice wall.

Hiro hastily pulled his Katana free from the wall and deflected the Icicles. He knocked one out of the air, and then another, and then...

“Kuo!”

Hiro didn’t manage to block the third icicle and was stabbed in the stomach, falling over.

But Hiro's actions were not in vain. While he was dealing with the Boss's magic attacks,

“Ho!”

Akanna appeared from the darkness and shattered the Lich's right arm holding the staff. Upon losing both the arms,

“Gust!”

The Lich called forth his wind magic once more to push Akanna back.

“Defy Gravity! Flight!”

The Lich lifted up into the sky. And with the three hunters watching, the legs fell off from the hips and attached themselves to the elbows.

It was a strange sight to see; Arms replaced by legs, with feet where hands used to be. The staff flew up from the ground and placed itself between the toes.

“Cold which burns, Blade that severs! Scythe of Ice!”

Upon his incantations, a large blade formed on the tip of the staff; Like those of Grim Reaper.

“Grrrrr.....”

Cain began to growl upon seeing the Lich’s Scythe.

‘2nd Phase...’

Sungjin fixed the grip on his Katana.

“Uho!”

Akanna turned his spear around and readied his combat stance. Hiro gulped down a potion as quickly as he could.

Once the Lich was done transforming, it returned to the ground. Sungjin, Akanna, and Hiro all charged at the Lich simultaneously.

The Lich moved back as it swung the Scythe. Due to the staff’s length, the length of its legs, and the length of the humerus, the reach of the Lich’s attack was enormous.

And because the Lich continuously swung his Scythe, no one, not even Sungjin could easily approach him. Taking advantage of the Hunters’ hesitation, the Lich recited an incantation.

“Spreading Death, Orb of Ice”

A small spherical orb appeared on the Lich’s hands and started

floating towards the hunters. The orb was moving even slower than it looked.

It was doubtful whether it would hit anyone who was paying attention. Then, Sungjin recalled something from his past.

‘I’ve seen that before...’

And the moment he recalled just what it was, he shouted as he threw himself onto the floor.

“Get down!”

The orb exploded and scattered shrapnel everywhere. Sungjin braced himself. There was no way to avoid all the debris.

But, Sungjin felt no pain after the explosion. When he raised his head, he saw Cain standing over him bleeding; Shrapnels were embedded all over his body.

‘Whine’

Wrath took Sungjin’s heart, and he leaped to his feet infuriated. Hiro and Akanna both were hurt and couldn’t move properly. Sungjin charged at the Lich alone.

The Lich swung his Scythe like a whip, but Sungjin dodged every swing and moved closer to the Lich. Once Sungjin got close

enough, the Lich hurriedly recited an incantation.

“Ice Shield”

But the ice wall could not hold up to Sungjin’s blade guided by anger. The wall crumbled away to nothing. In moments, Sungjin bisected the Lich’s arms (made of Leg bones).

“Gust!”

The Lich, who was now without arms or legs retreated after reciting the incantations. Just the skull and the torso left. Sungjin dashed forward to finish off the boss.

“Oryah!”

“Oh Ho!”

Behind Sungjin, Akanna and Hiro got up and also charged together. The Lich saw the three hunters and began an incantation.

“Cold which obstructs! Frostbite!”

Ice pillars emerged from the ground and froze the hunter’s feet to the ground. The Lich attempted to use the opportunity to shout an incantation, but

“Free Ark!”

The Shackle on Sungjin’s arm gave off a brilliant light, and the ice holding his feet gave away without resistance.

Freeing himself of the magical bindings, Sungjin sped towards the boss like a bullet. The Lich, who assumed the Frostbite would last a bit longer,

“Wind which freezes all, Ice which rips everything apart!”

Because of Sungjin who freed himself in an instant and had charged towards him, he wasn’t able to complete the spell.

“Blizzard Sto...”

Sungjin, in his extreme anger, cut the Lich from the bottom up; Starting from the tailbone and reaching all the way to the jawbone. He cut the Lich apart in Half.

[Objective complete. Returning to Hunter’s Hall in 17 Minutes and 52 Seconds.]

The Cube announced victory, but Sungjin was not happy at all. He walked up to Cain, who was laying on the ground.

Cain was bleeding out and dying. Shortly after, he disappeared with a ‘bang’ and returned to the form of a wooden carving.

Sungjin picked up the figurine.

“Thank you Cain... You worked hard.”

After a moment, Sungjin placed the figurine in his pocket.

*

[Objective complete. Returning to Hunter's Hall in 17 Minutes and 52 Seconds.]

Once they heard the announcements, Henrik and Kultu came back to see the other three men.

“Good work, all of you... Though, are you alright?”

Henrik was right to be worried. Akanna and Hiro were dripping with blood. Shards of ice still pierced their skin in many places, and small and large cuts covered their bodies.

Only Kei was left devoid of cuts and bruises. Kei swung his katana few times and then turned to leave. But

“Kei.... No. Kei Sama.”

Hiro stopped Kei. Kei turned to see what Hiro wanted. Hiro got down to the ground and gave a deep bow on his hands and knees.

“I, Watanabe Hiroaki of 20 years of age, have been shown new heights of greatness. I wish to make you my sensei, so please accept me as your pupil.”

Kei looked uncomfortable... no, he looked alarmed.

“What are you talking about? We’re going our separate ways after this chapter...”

Hiro was insistent.

“Please accept me as your pupil anyway. You never know if we will meet each other again in another chapter.”

Kei returned his sword to the scabbard and replied.

“Even if you say that, there is no option other than to become stronger on your own.”

Even though the Chapter was completed safely, Kei looked distraught. Suddenly he called to the Operator.

“Operator, how much time left?”

[You will return to the Hunter’s Hall in 17 Minutes and 24 Seconds.]

After asking for the time, Kei turned to leave. Hiro, who had his forehead touching the ground, looked up and stood up to follow.

“Sensei, where are you going? I will go with you.”

The other two people, Henrik and Kultu, looked at each other. The Boss monster was killed, but there was bound to be more undead mobs remaining somewhere.

In other words, the safest place right now was standing close to Kei.

“...Let’s go too.”

The two men understood each other without communicating. They, too, followed Sungjin. Akanna briefly wiped the blood off of his face and followed behind the others.

The other hunters followed Kei like a Shadow. Hiro stayed close to Kei and continued to try and make conversation with him.

“Sensei, please give me one word of advice. How can I become powerful like you?”

Kei finally broke the silence and half-heartedly gave a response.

“Operator already said how. Increase your stats, get good

items.... And stuff.”

He recited a textbook answer.

“Do you have no comment about my Kendo skills?”

Kei bit his lips for a moment and pondered, but he gave another half-hearted answer in the end.

“Just do a lot of fighting. Forget everything you learned at the Dojo.”

“Excuse me?”

Kei explained himself.

“We’re not fighting Humans. We fight monsters. Real combat experience here is more important.”

“Ah... Thank you for your teachings Sensei.”

Kei shook his head at Hiro’s words. And along the way

“Sensei? Where are you headed to anyway? Don’t go too far. A Ghost appears somewhere ahead.”

At that moment,

“A ghost?”

Kei, who was responding in a half bored and half annoyed manner, changed his tone of voice. He stopped in his tracks and turned to interrogate Hiro.

“What ghost?”

Seeing Kei’s sudden spike in interest, Hiro excitedly explained what he knew.

“Well, You know, a female ghost like those you see in scary movies. With pale skin and blood dripping from the lips...”

Kei took hold of Hiro’s shoulders and spoke once more.

“Where did you see it?”

“Way over there~ It was flying around. Right before we saw the boss. You know, it’s pretty hard to tell where we were though...”

Kei glanced at Kultu and Henrik. The two men shook their heads. Kei returned his gaze to Hiro.

“That ghost... is it very noticeable?”

“Very. She wore a white dress and seemed to glow slightly. She should be visible from far away.”

Kei suddenly turned his head.

“Hidden...”

He muttered something under his breath and suddenly shouted

“Swift Paw”

His boots suddenly grew claws. And before the others recovered from the surprise, Kei began running away at an incredible speed.

No, it was beyond incredible. It was completely outside the boundary of human limitations.

Although Henrik and Kultu stared with their mouths open, Hiro yelled

“Sensei! Wait for me!”

Only Hiro chased after Kei in the darkness.

Chapter 019 - Greysoul Cemetery (5)

Sungjin blazed through Greysoul Cemetery, searching. ‘Swift Paw – Wolf’s step’s’ effect was stronger than anticipated.

Because it gave ten times the normal movement speed, Sungjin was actually forced to slow down.

But the result was magnificent; It effectively reduced the time spent on searching to a tenth.

Sungjin thought of what he had just heard moments before, as he continued to search between the many tombstones.

“Well, You know, a female ghost like those you see in scary movies. With pale skin and blood dripping from the lips...”

A hint came from an unexpected source.

‘...I am certain that the ghost has something to do with the hidden boss or the hidden piece.’

Now that he thought of it, he had heard some rumors of a ghost in chapter 3. Hunters from the previous life sometimes gossiped about it.

‘And here I thought that I should have used the ‘Treasure Hunter’ active skill right after the boss...’

Sungjin saved his active skill for now. He already got a hint about at least one of the two things, and there was a possibility that the hint the Operator provides is on the same subject.

There was not one undead remaining in the entire Greysoul Cemetery. Most were wiped out during his search, and the stragglers were hunted down by the other four hunters.

‘...Ghost...where are you?’

Sungjin checked his surroundings as he sped through the Cemetery. And finally, his speed gradually started decreasing.

‘It’s been 30 seconds already? I haven’t located the ghost yet...’

Soon Sungjin was back to running at his normal speed. He paused for a moment.

He was surrounded by an indistinguishable sea of tombstones.

‘Damn...’

Sungjin turned his head while swearing, and just then he saw something white floating in the distance; a woman in a white dress.

‘There!’

Sungjin sprinted at his normal speed towards the ghost.

*

“Sensei!”

Hiro tried to keep up with Kei, but it was impossible. Kei ran at impossible speeds, and Hiro lost sight of him in mere moments.

He paused and stared towards the general direction Kei disappeared to. Anyone else would have given up at this point. But not Hiro.

“Holy cow! Sensei is so amazing!”

After taking a quick breather, Hiro continued with his chase.

After about 2 minutes, he spotted the ghost he saw earlier.

“Eek!”

Hiro stopped immediately. In fact, he subconsciously took a step back. He was alone without Henrik, Kultu or Akanna.

Hiro was not afraid of Skeletons or Zombies, but the ghost scared the wits out of him. Then, he spotted Kei next to the ghost.

“What should I do...?”

Hiro nibbled on his nails and began to fret. He was in a dilemma due to the forces of attraction and repulsion being gathered in one spot.

‘...I am a man of martial arts. I need to overcome my fears...’

Hiro finally made up his mind and approached Kei and the ghost. Once he got within earshot, Kei turned to look at him.

“...Hmm? What? How did you catch up?”

Moments later, the ghost turned to look at him as well.

“Eee!”

Being stared at by a ghost with an ashen face and completely black eyes, Hiro wanted to run away. But, Kei stopped him.

“Don’t worry. This ghost is...non-hostile.”

Kei was right. The Ghost never showed intentions to attack anyone. But Hiro still could not approach the apparition.

Hostile or not, the appearance of the ghost was enough to inspire

fear in a man's heart.

And while Hiro was keeping his distance from the ghost, the ghost looked towards Kei. And in a similar manner, as she had done with Henrik, she raised her hands to point far in the distance and

“Hiiiiii....”

Let out a strange noise. Kei was completely unafraid of the ghost. He simply stroked his chin.

“This thing... I think it's trying to say something...”

Was all he said. Suddenly, the ghost began to float away towards the direction she had pointed out moments ago. Kei followed her without another word. Hiro watched for a moment.

“Sen...Sensei!”

He called after Kei, but Kei did not respond. Hiro had no choice but to follow the two, albeit from a few steps behind.

After a long while, the ghost stopped again and

“Haaaaaa....”

Let out a strange noise. Kei stopped next to her.

“Hmmm... Is there something here?”

He mused to himself.

“Operator.”

He suddenly called out the Operator.

“Salamander’s ash.”

He took out a Salamander’s ash from the inventory. Hiro was familiar with that item. He used it in Chapter 1 to hunt the Trolls, and against the wolves in Chapter 2.

Kei opened the package and spread the ash across his Katana.

‘Foof’

The katana lit up on fire and illuminated the area. Using the Katana as a torch, he checked the immediate surroundings. And exactly under the ghost,

He spotted a stone crypt door engraved with an image of two identical girls, standing back to back.

“...Twins...”

Kei spoke to himself and sliced the door open with his Katana.

“Kahaaa~”

The Ghost screamed out loud. It was still layered with an unholy cadence but, this time, it seemed...happy.

She spun in the air once and then flew into the stone entrance. Kei and Hiro peaked into the opening in the stone doorway.

It was difficult to see what was inside. Once Kei inserted the sword between the crack. A large pile of bones could be seen below.

“Hiiiie!”

Hiro gasped in terror again. On the other hand, Kei moved to enter the crypt fearlessly. Hiro grabbed his shirt and pulled him back.

“Sensei, are you not afraid of ghosts?”

Kei looked back towards Hiro and

“...I’ve already died once. Why would I fear ghosts?”

Said something Hiro didn't quite understand. Before Hiro could respond, Kei entered the crypt. The entryway was too small and dark. Hiro made an excuse for himself.

"I can just wait for sensei out here..."

He sat down in front of the Crypt. What Kei just said moments before: 'I've already died once', was completely and utterly ignored.

*

Sungjin entered the Columbarium alone. Using the Katana as a torch, he illuminated different parts of the room. The Columbarium was damp and narrow. Despite it all, Sungjin entered confidently taking no mind to the environment.

For him, it was beyond a doubt that this place was what he had been searching for all along. At the end of the narrow walkway, a small space of about 30 meters cubed emerged.

And within, the female Ghost who led him here was waiting for him. Standing inside of a crypt surrounded by bones, looking up at a bloodied ghost, Sungjin thought

'...yeah I think I can understand why people might be afraid.'

"Hyaaa..."

The ghost let out a strange noise and once again raised her hands. When Sungjin saw her hands, he thought it was different from before.

Her hands were not in a grip and were held in their natural state with the fingers slightly curled. But Sungjin thought she had her pointer finger raised slightly higher than the rest as if pointing towards something.

‘What is she pointing to?’

Sungjin followed the direction of her finger. She was pointing at one of the walls of the Columbarium.

Sungjin slowly moved towards the wall. Upon closer inspection, he noticed that one of the bricks was slightly pushed out compared to the rest of the bricks of that wall.

Sungjin carefully gripped the brick and pulled it out gingerly.

The brick came out much easier than expected. And inside of the wall, Sungjin could see a wrapped object.

‘What is this...?’

Sungjin reached in and pulled it out. The wrapped object slid out easily and kept on coming out of the wall. Much like a sword.

Once Sungjin had it all the way out, the wrappings unwound themselves with a “Pam!” and a sword sheathed in extremely shabby and worn out scabbard revealed itself.

The grip was so weathered that it looked as if it would break if pulled too hard from the scabbard. Sungjin gently grasped the handle of the sword and drew the blade.

‘Holy...’

Sungjin couldn’t help but exclaim out loud. Hidden within the worn out grip and scabbard was a pristine blade, giving off a soft blue glow.

Once the blade was drawn, the ghost next to him disintegrated into a cloud of smoke and was sucked into the blade.

“Kyahaaa~”

Without fail, the ghost managed to let out a strange noise. Once the ghost was gone,

[Congratulations]

Sungjin could hear the Operator’s voice.

[You have found the Hidden Piece]

[Moon Spectre – Possessed Sword Obtained.]

“...Good.”

Sungjin grinned as he inspected his sword.

Moon Spectre – Possessed Sword

Legendary Katana – Strength S Dexterity A Mind B

Passive Skill

Soul Absorption(II)

Recover 2% of the total mana per hit.

Active Skill

Deathly Wail (IV)

A ghost will induce fear to all nearby creatures. Cooldown 10 minutes

Katana imbued with the power of ghosts. It is unknown if the vengeful spirit was originally the owner of the Katana, or if the soul became vengeful upon being slain by the Katana.

“...Legendary?”

He received a completed Legendary item. It was unbelievable. He wished he had known about such an easy to obtain Legendary class weapon the first time around.

Sungjin glanced over to the specs. The most eye-catching stats were obviously the S rank Strength and A rank Dex bonus damages.

“Operator, what was the bonus per ranks again?”

[Rank affects stats as follows.]

[Rank E – x0.1 | Rank D – x0.2 | Rank C – x0.5]

[Rank B – x1.0 | Rank A – x1.5 | Rank S – x2.0]

[Rank SS – x3.0 | Rank SSS – x4.0]

Sungjin had not come across an enemy yet that he could not kill in a single strike with his Strength C Dex D basic Katana. And yet, he just received an S and an A grade Legendary Katana, effectively raising his damage by four times.

‘Well... I guess for the next few chapters, all the enemies are basically going to be made of wet paper mache...’

Sungjin mused over his stats as he read the notes for skills. ‘Deathly Wail(IV)’ seemed fairly useful.

And upon realizing that there was more to the stat bonuses, he returned to the Sword’s ranks. Rank B bonus damage from Mind Power.

This meant that raising STR by 1 would increase his damage by 2, but raising MND would also provide 1 bonus damage.

‘Putting MND stat damage boost on a Katana... means...’

Furthermore, it also had a passive skill ‘Soul Absorption(II)’ as well.

‘In other words, this is a sword designed for a magic swordsman.’

The base stats were great, but Sungjin needed to think about this one.

‘I’ll come back to it another time.’

Sungjin finally put the sword back in the scabbard.

“Shink!”

The sound of the blade sliding into the scabbard was crisp. Sungjin left the Columbarium, with the Moon Spectre hanging from his side.

Chapter 020 - Greysoul Cemetery (6)

When Sungjin exited the Columbarium, he found Hiro waiting for him at the entrance.

“Sensei! Are you alright?”

Sungjin nodded nonchalantly. From start to finish, the ghost had no intentions to hurt anyone.

Her existence was a form of a test, designed to protect the Moon Specter from cowards. Hiro saw the Moon Specter and commented

“Sensei, what is that god-awful sword?”

“...it’s...”

He didn’t really want to explain.

“It looks even worse than the starting sword you were using until now.”

“...No...”

Don’t judge a book by its cover... Sungjin gave up on giving an explanation.

‘Annoying little brat...I hope we never see each other again.’

“...I just saw it lying around.”

Sungjin made a half-hearted excuse and called the Operator.

“Operator, Cube.”

Sungjin returned his ‘Basic Katana’ into the cube.

“Eh...?”

Hiro looked strangely at Sungjin, but Sungjin ignored him and said,

“Operator, how much time left?”

[Returning in 14 minutes and 34 seconds.]

‘14 minutes...’

He still had the hidden boss to kill. Sungjin decided to use ‘Treasure Hunter’ for the first time.

“Operator, activate ‘Treasure Hunter’ skill.”

[Title ‘Treasure Hunter’ is not currently equipped. The skill can only be used once.]

“I know, I understand so just use it.”

The Operator seemed to sigh due to Sungjin’s attitude, but she quickly recited the hint about the hidden boss.

[Cemetery, final resting place of the dead.]

[But, to he who disturbs the coffins and reawakens the departed souls]

[Necromancer, a Cemetery is but a farm.]

[Destroy the farm and those who care for it]

[Will inevitably intervene]

“hmm...”

Hiro tilted his head, confused.

“Sensei, what is...”

Sungjin placed his pointer finger over his lips. Hiro stopped speaking while Sungjin mulled over the Operator’s hint.

‘Destroy the farm...’

Sungjin looked around him. Greysoul Cemetery contained a staggering number of tombstones.

‘Destroy... Destroy, eh?’

Sungjin looked down at the closest tombstone.

‘R.I.P Chris Ben...’

It was a tombstone with a stranger’s name. It looked like there used to be more engravings after his name, but it was too weathered to make out the words.

‘If there is an owner of this grave, I apologize.’

Sungjin bowed to apologize, and in one swift motion, he pulled the katana out and cut the tombstone in half.

“Wow!”

Hiro exclaimed in awe. It was not directed at his swordsmanship since Hiro had already witnessed it. Neither was it directed at his destructive power. That, too, he had witnessed it.

He was awed by the blue glow of the 'Moon Specter's' blade. Despite the nearly non-existent moonlight, the Sword still shined bright blue.

“...in that crappy looking scabbard...”

Sungjin placed his finger over his lips again.

“Shh”

Anyone would understand the second time. Hiro closed his mouth once again.

Sungjin walked over to the next Tombstone and cut it down again. This time,

‘Cough...Cough...’

Sungjin heard sounds of a cough from somewhere. He turned to look at Hiro.

“Did you... cough?”

“No, I have not Sensei. I was closing my mouth. But... I also...”

The two men scanned their surroundings wordlessly. The Undead do not cough. It was also possible that it was one of the

three other hunters, but they were nowhere in sight.

And amongst them, two carried a lantern, so they should be easy to spot.

“Quiet down again.”

Hiro nodded at Sungjin’s words. Sungjin moved from Tombstone to Tombstone and cut down every tombstone in the way.

“Cough... Cough... Pah!”

Sungjin and Hiro exchanged glances. This time, the voice even spat phlegm.

‘This is it...!’

Filled with certainty, Sungjin addressed Hiro.

“Hey... You said your name was Hiro, right?”

Being called by name for the first time, Hiro answered enthusiastically.

“Yes, Sensei. My name is Watanabe Hiroaki.”

“I don’t care. Go break some Tombstones for me.”

“Right away Sensei.”

The two of them began the work of destroying tombstones. Sungjin simply held the ‘Moon Specter’ horizontally and ran by the graves.

The Moon Specter, as if to demonstrate its A rank Dexterity bonus boost, cut through the tombstones like a hot knife through butter.

“Haa!”

Hiro shouted and cut the Tombstones one by one, striking with all his strength.

And with each tombstone that fell

“Cough Cough Wheeze”

A loud and rough cough could be heard coming from somewhere. And as the numbers of desecrated tombstones continued to increase, the volume of the cough increased as well.

And after Sungjin had cut down several dozen tombstones, a voice loud enough to shake the entire Cemetery spoke out.

“Who dares disturb my fields?”

It was a voice amplified by magic. The Cubes gave out announcements.

[Warning! Hidden Boss]

[Gravekeeper “Oryx” has appeared!]

Sungjin quickly scanned his surroundings. But he did not spot the Hidden Boss “Oryx”.

‘Just where...’

Sungjin bit down hard and ground his teeth. It appeared as though he would have to go searching for the hidden boss somewhere in the Cemetery.

“So annoying...”

Sungjin activated the Swift Paw once more.

“Swift Paw, Activate”

Claws emerged from the wolf boots. Sungjin began searching the Cemetery at a breakneck speed.

Henrik and Kultu put their Lanterns down and chatted. They did not move away from the location where the Lich had appeared and died.

“Is Northern Europe a good place to live? I heard there are no beggars or anything there.”

“Meh, it’s not all that it’s cracked up to be. How is Nepal? From what I hear from people coming back from climbing the Himal...”

Interrupting them,

“Cough... Wheeze”

Loud coughing and wheezing sounds could be heard. The two men turned to look at Akanna.

Akanna raised both his hands to show he didn’t do it.

“Then who...?”

As Henrik looked around to see where the sound came from, the Operator gave out an announcement.

[Warning! Hidden Boss]

[Gravekeeper “Oryx” has appeared!]

“Hidden Boss?”

While Henrik was still recovering from shock, Akanna leaped up, spear at the ready. He stared into the distance and said

“Enemies... Many”

At his words, Henrik and Kultu picked up their weapons and prepared themselves. In the distance, they could see a green light flickering.

And around it followed a horde of Zombies, Skeletons, and Ghouls.

“What? What’s that?”

Henrik and Kultu both started panicking. And they heard a loud amplified voice ring out.

“...You must be... the culprits who defiled my Cemetery... Cough cough...”

Henrik and Kultu looked at each other. They were no match for the approaching horde.

‘Run away!’

Wordlessly, they agreed. If they could just run until they find Kei and Hiro, they could probably survive. But,

“Unholy power, strip the skin and expose the bones. Frenzy!”

When the voice finished his incantations, the ghouls charged forward at incredible speeds.

Outrunning them was impossible. Kultu and Henrik both prepared to fight the horde head on.

“Hou!”

Akanna began swinging his spear. But behind the Ghouls, a sea of zombies and skeletons followed, also with the massive speed boost. Running at at least twice the normal speed.

*

Sungjin heard the magic incantations from afar.

“Unholy power, strip the skin and expose the bones. Frenzy!”

‘There!’

Sungjin ran as fast as he could towards the sound. But when he arrived,

“Ahhhhh!”

He came just in time to see Kultu being ripped apart to pieces by ghouls.

‘...Fuck...’

“Save me! Help!”

Henrik tried to run towards Sungjin as soon as he noticed him.

“Haoh!”

Akanna was still fighting against the waves of undead.

“Powers of Corruption, unleash the blight upon the living. Decay of Death!”

He was hit by a magical bolt fired by the Necromancer. His arm began rotting away starting from the fingertips.

“Huh...”

Akanna dropped his spear in surprise which was the only thing

that was keeping him alive from the Undead horde in front of him. He was trampled by the wave of skeletons charging at him.

‘Fuckers!’

Sungjin had made haste to try and save them, but a thick wall of zombies blocked the way. Thanks to the Necromancer’s magic, they moved at twice the normal speed.

But still, it was no match for Sungjin’s dexterity. He swung the ‘Moon Specter’ with lightning fast strikes.

Sungjin originally had no trouble cutting them down with the Basic katana. With Moon Specter, fighting zombies was no different from swinging a sword at leaves falling through the air; so much as touching the enemies with the sword disintegrated them. Then suddenly

“Decay of Death”

Another bolt of magic flew out from the boss. Sungjin was forced to retreat.

“Kaaa!”

Akanna, buried under a mountain of skeletons, met his end.

“Fuck!”

Sungjin worked as quickly as possible to destroy his enemies around him. But the Gravekeeper Oryx chanted another spell.

“Awaken and become my slave! Rise of the Dead”

Kultu who had been ripped apart to pieces by ghouls and Akanna who was stabbed to death by the skeletons, stood up upon hearing the Gravekeeper’s command and picked up their weapons. All the while gushing with blood.

“My...God...”

Henrik stammered out in shock, and Sungjin finally hit the limits of his patience. He glared at the necromancer who took control of the recently deceased and swore under his breath.

‘You little bitch...’

But as if responding to his anger, he heard a voice from somewhere.

‘...Kill...’

It was the Mad God ‘Yanhurat’s’ voice. Sungjin fought against the temptation.

‘Shut your mouth.’

But the Voice continued, disregarding his wishes.

‘...Kill...’

And while he was distracted

“Hou!”

The Zombified Akanna attacked Sungjin with his spear. It was a precise and dangerous strike aimed at his neck. But nowhere near fast enough to seriously threaten Sungjin.

Even if his title was ‘Veteran Spearman’, Akanna couldn’t overcome the absolute difference in stat points. Sungjin easily broke off and pushed the spear to the side with his hands. And then

“Sorry”

Apologized into his ear and swung his Katana.

“Kaaaaagh...”

Akanna perished once more. Twice, back to back. Killing a zombified hunter with his own hands left a bitter taste in his mouth.

“My God... My God...”

Henrik was completely out of it, whispering to himself repeatedly.

“Sensei!”

He heard someone’s call from behind. He didn’t want to kill any more hunters with his own hands.

“...I am going to kill you with everything I’ve got, Gravekeeper.”

Sungjin prepared his ‘Moon Specter’ and charged towards the Necromancer head on.

Chapter 021 - Greysoul Cemetery (7)

Zombies, Skeletons, and Ghouls charged at Sungjin from all sides. Sungjin swung his katana and with each strike, dozens of enemies fell where they stood. But whenever Sungjin would cull their numbers,

“Rise of the Dead”

The Necromancer would call forth more and more undead from their graves. The ability was similar to Ahenna’s, but this was far worse.

It was impossible to gauge how many more undead would emerge from the ground, especially in the Cemetery where graves continued as far as the eyes could see. Soon, the sheer volume of the enemies forced Sungjin into a stalemate.

‘...Kill...’

Yanhurat beckoned Sungjin, but he did his best to ignore its temptations.

‘Shut up’

Meanwhile

“Pew”

Kultu’s arrows came flying at him. Instead of deflecting the blow with his weapon, Sungjin snatched it out of the air with his bare hands.

Kultu wordlessly drew another arrow and nocked it on the bow. If he were a human, he would have hesitated due to surprise at Sungjin’s overwhelming display of strength.

‘... are the Undead... unable to feel fear...?’

Sungjin paused to think about his ‘Moon Specter’ and the active ability “Deathly Wail”.

‘It’s worth a try.’

And while Sungjin was contemplating, the Necromancer cast another spell.

“Frenzy!”

The Undead began to ramp up speed. When Sungjin saw them, he instead returned the sword into the Sheath.

‘Shing...Click.’

And when the masses of undead had completely enveloped him, Sungjin pulled it out of the sheath and shouted

“Deathly Wail!”

The moment the Sword left the sheath,

“Kyaaaa!”

An unbelievably loud and otherworldly screech filled the air.

Immediately, the ghouls, skeletons, and zombies which surrounded him, scattered. The same enemies who had fought apathetically disregarding their lost limbs or his display of strength, escaped as fast as their legs would carry them.

They trampled each other in their haste to get away from Sungjin. Bones broke, limbs were lost, they clamored to climb over one another; it was pandemonium. Soon, the Cemetery was bare save the Gravekeeper ‘Oryx’.

He, too, trembled in fear, backing off slowly, holding his shovel defensively.

“You... That sword...”

It looked like there was something he wanted to say, but Sungjin did not care. He did not want to listen. Sungjin walked up to him and

“Shing”

Along with the sound of the blade slicing through the air, Oryx was beheaded.

And the moment his head separated from his shoulders, the undead dropped down in unison, as if marionettes were cut from their strings. Nothing stirred in the vicinity.

[Hidden boss ‘Gravekeeper Oryx’ Cleared.]

[Congratulations! You have managed to complete all objectives in this Chapter!]

[Disregarding the remaining time and ending the raid immediately.]

Once the hidden boss was cleared, the raid completion suddenly became 100%. It seemed that killing the necromancer simultaneously killed all the remaining undead as well. Sungjin took a glance at his sword ‘Moon Specter’ again.

‘That worked better than expected.’

Nevermind the undead, it even paralyzed the boss. With this much effectiveness, it was undoubtedly a very potent ability.

‘...Excellent.’

Sungjin smiled and resheathed his sword. But

“Ahhh!”

He heard someone screaming. Looking around, he saw Henrik laying on the ground trembling in fear.

It was probably due to ‘Moon Specter’s’ ‘Deathly Wail’. Sungjin also saw Hiro disappearing in the distance, running away.

‘It’s also effective against humans.’

It was a good opportunity to learn what ‘Deathly Wail’ was capable of; the Legendary weapon lived up to its name. Sungjin scanned his surroundings since the fight was now over.

Closeby, Akanna and Kultu’s corpse lay wrangled on the ground. Seeing them, Sungjin bit his lower lip.

‘...I didn’t want for this to happen.’

If he had not summoned the hidden boss, they would not have

died. Sungjin closed his eyes and hung his head to give them a moment of silence; He felt pity and remorse for the dead.

Meanwhile, Henrik had recovered enough to approach Sungjin and offer some kind words.

“Don’t let it get to you, Kei. According to the Operator, they didn’t die; they were just sent to the ‘Purgatory’. They’ll all be revived along with the others once the raids are complete.”

Henrik was right. At this point, the only thing Sungjin could do for them was to complete the raids.

If he could manage to do that, then the two men would be revived along with everyone at the end. Of course, if he failed, none of them would ever see the light of the day again. Hiro, who somehow managed to make it back offered his words as well.

“Sensei, with your skills, you will definitely see the raids to the end. The two people that died today would have believed in you as well.”

Their words eased Sungjin’s sense of guilt. He looked at the corpses again and bid

‘Please believe in me.’

He gathered his hands and closed his eyes. He didn’t have a religion, but he felt that he had to offer them prayers. The

Operator interrupted him with an announcement.

[Calculating Rewards Earned.]

[Monsters Slain. Zombie: 120. Skeleton: 60. Ghoul 40. Total 2400 points.]

[Boss Monster Slain: Lich Deathmond: 300 points.]

[Hidden Boss Gravekeeper Oryx: 300 points.]

[Final point count: 3000 Points. Distributing points.]

Henrik's cube began the distribution. The person with the lowest contribution always went first.

[Your contribution is 6%. 180 Stat points, 180 Black Coins awarded. Raid Clear Bonus 800 Stat points and 800 Black Coins awarded. Distributing 980 Stat points and 980 Black Coins.]

Hiro's cube was second.

[Your contribution is 18%. 540 Stat points, 540 Black Coins awarded. Raid Clear Bonus 800 Stat points and 800 Black Coins awarded. Distributing 1340 Stat points and 1340 Black Coins.]

And finally, Sungjin's Cube spoke up.

[Your contribution is 76.0%. 2280 Stat points, 2280 Black Coins awarded. Raid Clear Bonus 800 Stat points and 800 Black Coins awarded. Item effect 'Additional 10% gained' activated. Distributing 3080 Stat points and 3388 Black Coins.]

'3080 points and 3388 coins'

Sungjin memorized the numbers for now.

[And now we will distribute the items.]

First to receive the items was Henrik.

[Skeleton's Scimitar]

[Recovery Potion – Small X3]

Followed by Hiro's brief item reward payout.

[Skeleton's bone armor]

[Spell Book – Frostbite]

[Recovery Potion – Small X4]

Finally, it was Sungjin's turn.

[Sael's Breath – Mantle of Freezing]

[Manyata – Master’s Bell]

[Ring of Deathmond – Lich’s Finger]

[Spell Book – Frostbite]

[Spell Book – Rise of the Dead]

[Recovery Potion – Small X4]

By now, everyone was familiar with collecting their loot. Sungjin put everything, except for his three equipment pieces, into the cube.

[Last but not the least, you will be awarded titles you’ve earned on this raid.]

Of course first was Henrik.

[Guide – The path to the boss monster becomes visible]

Henrik became disappointed.

“I’ll probably just die if I get to the boss, what’s the point of this...?”

Next was Hiro

[Undead Hunter – deal 30% bonus damage to undead type monsters.]

“There’s going to be more undead in the future? Fueee...”

Finally Sungjin.

[Elite Samurai – increases damage dealt by Katana type weapons by 40%.]

“Wow...”

Sungjin didn’t have to respond; Hiro was exclaiming loud enough for both of them.

“That’s so amazing, Sensei!”

On the other hand, Sungjin listened quietly.

‘Elite... At least it’s the highest tier...’

Damage increases to 1.4 times the normal and 1.2 times while unequipped. It was an amazing spec to have.

But, ever since Sungjin obtained the S grade ‘Moon Specter”, he already had enough power to one shot any non-boss enemies for the next 2~3 chapters.

This title was like pouring oil onto a raging inferno.

‘Well... I suppose it will come in handy in the late game...’

Sungjin quietly and nonchalantly accepted his new title. Once the distribution of rewards was over, Sungjin called over the Operator.

“Operator, will there be debriefing once we reach the Hunter’s Hall?”

[No. There will be no debriefing. You will be sent to the black market directly in 6 minutes and 32 seconds.]

Sungjin nodded.

‘My memories were correct.’

Although he had an easier time compared to the earlier two chapters where he didn’t have the proper items to face the monsters, confronting the undead tired him out mentally.

Sungjin couldn’t wait to return and get a good rest at the ‘Ninety Nine Nights’. However, Hiro ran up to him and asked

“Sensei, please... What are hidden bosses?”

Sungjin looked at Hiro carefully.

“That’s...”

‘Should I tell him or not...’

Sungjin deliberated for a moment. Hidden bosses were always stronger than regular bosses.

In fact, Even bosses were supposed to be difficult to clear for an average hunter. Being greedy and carelessly attempting Hidden bosses was the surest way to get eliminated. Sungjin shook his head in response.

“No. It’s too difficult for you.”

“But... I’ve never seen three Heroic Items drop from a single raid. I want to become strong like Sensei.”

Sungjin shook his head. He had countless experiences behind him, overcoming obstacles and death. He did not wish to unwittingly send a child younger than himself to his own death.

“You saw earlier, what happened to Akanna and Kultu. Do you still want to know?”

Hiro could not be dissuaded.

“Yes, I wish to know sir.”

Hiro was making a serious face for the first time. Sungjin struggled in his mind for a while and finally responded.

“To be fair... There’s nothing for me to tell you at all. The only thing I can say is that every chapter also hosts a hidden boss and that the hidden boss is incredibly powerful. You probably figured it out by now, right?”

“What do you mean?”

Sungjin answered Hiro’s question.

“That I am also figuring things out as I go, and I don’t have all the answers.”

“...Is that so?”

Sungjin nodded.

“Yes.”

“Then... I guess I should start searching for them starting next chapter.”

Sungjin waved his finger in response.

“Ah... that’s exactly why I didn’t want to tell you about it earlier. Hidden Bosses are stronger than regular bosses. So if you do ever want to challenge a hidden boss...”

Sungjin swallowed before continuing his explanation.

“Only attempt to search for the hidden boss if all five members of your party survived the regular boss. Only attempt the hidden boss if your team has great synergy and you feel confident that your team can overcome even the hidden boss. Otherwise, you’re just going to get everyone killed in vain.”

At Sungjin’s serious response, Hiro fell quiet again. Sungjin watched him and thought to himself.

‘He wouldn’t carelessly put himself into unmanageable danger with this much warning, right?’

Even ‘Killing the boss with all party members intact’ was no easy feat. 10 or so seconds later, he finally responded.

“...I understand Sensei.”

With the remaining time, Sungjin decided to inspect the three items he had received.

‘Ah... I didn’t even check what these items do.’

Due to his conversation with Hiro, Sungjin didn’t even have the opportunity to inspect his new equipments. Sungjin lifted one up to check it...

[Returning to the Black market in 10 seconds. 10, 9, 8...]

The Operator began a countdown. Hiro bid him goodbye.

“Then Sensei, I promise that the next time we meet I will be much stronger.”

Sungjin responded to Hiro’s farewell.

“Well... If you don’t get stronger, you won’t survive very long anyway.”

And it was the truth. Hiro was gifted with talent, but he was still very likely to die before reaching end game. The final few chapters were impossible to survive without having the skill and luck of ‘The Chosen Ones’.

Henrik who was stuck between the two men awkwardly gave his farewells.

“Oh... I was able to survive thanks to you two. Thank you very

much.”

“Yes, you worked hard too, Henrik. Take care.”

And thus the farewells were said, and the three of them disappeared to the Black Market.

Chapter 022 - Black Market – Third Shopping

Once Sungjin materialized in the Black Market, he walked until he reached a street side Tea shop. He entered the shop and took a seat. The Operator began an explanation.

[This is a street side Tea Shop run by shop owner ‘Xiu Ran’, First Drop.]

[You can enjoy various flavors of tea for free here.]

A large Panda demihuman approached Sungjin.

“What would you like to drink, dear Hunter?”

“Black Tea, Royal Blend please.”

“Understood. Will be right out.”

Moments later, the shopkeeper handed Sungjin a Chinese style tea. The aroma filled the air. Tasting the tea, Sungjin took out his equipment to inspect it.

He needed to know which items were worth keeping so he could decide to sell it or not.

First up was a cape which had the consistency and appearance of a jellyfish's skin. It was extremely thin, billowed easily in the wind and was partially opaque. Parts of it were frozen.

Sael's Breath – Mantle of Freezing

Heroic Mantle Damage reduction 5%

Passive Skill

Protection from Flame (III)

Reduce damage inflicted by Fire based attacks by 60%

Active Skill

Solidify(IV)

Mantle instantly freezes, briefly reducing damage taken by 99%. Cooldown 5 Minutes

Mantle once owned by Ice Queen Sael.

She, who froze a large number of people around her due to her inability to control her magic, learned to control her power thanks to the love and effort by her younger sister. (Note at the end)

‘... 99% damage reduction...’

It would definitely come in handy when facing enemies with undodgeable attacks – like the Lich's Orb of Ice. The passive was

also very helpful.

Sungjin held up the mantle.

“Equip”

The Mantle left his hands and attached itself to his back, and swayed in the wind. He could almost not feel the weight of the cape at all; save for the slight chill he felt on his back.

The next item was a strange looking hand bell. It was small and had minuscule engravings.

Manyata – Master’s Bell

Heroic Accessory

Active Skill – Call of Madness(IV)

Owned Summons become invulnerable for 10 seconds and raises Damage and Speed by 400%. Cooldown 10 minutes

Gravekeeper Oryx’s Bell.

He used this weapon to drive his subordinates like a slave.

The bell was well suited for the Necromancer.

‘Mmm... Summons... Summons eh? Where can I get one...?’

Now that he thought about it, he remembered he had Cain.

‘If I use this on Cain... I’ll keep it on me for now.’

Sungjin placed the bell inside his pocket. The next item he checked was a long skeletal finger.

Ring of Deathmond – Lich’s Finger

Heroic Ring

Active Skill

Lich’s Beckoning(III)

Absorb mana from the Corpses. Recovers 75% of the total mana. Cooldown 10 Minutes

Boost Magic(II)

The next magic cast by incantation becomes doubly powerful and costs twice the mana. Cooldown 5 minutes.

Lich Deathmond’s Finger bones.’

His finger caused many hearts to freeze over.

This was the main boss’s regular drop, so it was rather common.

During his last life, many magic users had kept this ring around.

It was because both the active skills on it were extremely advantageous for a mage.

‘Magic...’

Sungjin had been purely a swordsman in his last life.

His primary weapon ‘Blood Vengeance’ had SS Strength and A Dexterity bonus stats, so he had raised Strength for extra damage, Dexterity for combat speed, and Endurance for the preservation of his life.

Surviving chapter to chapter was always a struggle, so raising INT or Mind were avoided entirely. Naturally, he never had an opportunity to use magic.

So whenever he received a mage type item, he would trade with other hunters or sell it off at the Black Market to buy potions. But, things were different now.

‘I think this time I should invest in trying out magic as well.’

He had invested a significant amount of points into Strength, Dexterity and Endurance to get through the first three chapters, but investing in magic for late game was a good idea. Trying to beat later part of the Raids with purely physical attacks had its own limitations.

Since he had a title which raised all stat points by 30%, he could afford to try investing somewhat into Magic Power and Mental Power. Investing into becoming a Magic Swordsman would definitely prove to be advantageous later down the line.

‘It would be preferable if there was an actual magician though...’

He couldn’t help but recall memories of his past life.

‘Leave your back to me’

Sungjin shook his head. He could not trust anyone. It was great if they were helpful. But he had to prepare for moments when others were not dependable. Sungjin lifted up the Lich’s finger and said

“Equip”

The Lich’s finger moved to his left ring finger and

‘Creak’

Made uncomfortable noise as it formed a ring around his hand by curling up. Judging purely by its appearance, it was an extremely unattractive ring.

After Sungjin had examined his three equipment pieces which he received from this round, he called the Operator

“Operator, give me both of the Spellbooks I got this round.”

The Operator gave Sungjin two Spellbooks from the cube. On the cover, the name of the spells was written.

Spell Book – Frostbite

2nd Class Blue Magic

The ground freezes, binding(rooting) enemies to the ground.

‘I don’t know when I’ll ever use it...’

Since he opted to try magic this time, he decided to try the spells he had obtained. Sungjin lifted up the book and shouted

“Memorize!”

The Spellbook – ‘FrostBite’ emitted bright blue lights, and spontaneously combusted. The Operator gave an announcement.

[Spell – FrostBite memorized.]

[Incantation for the spell is ‘Binding Frost!’]

The Operator explained expressionlessly about the spell.

“...Ok.”

Sungjin looked over at the other spell he had received.

Spellbook – Rise of the Dead

4th Class Black Magic

Revive Fallen enemies as undead summons to use in combat.
10 minutes duration.

There was no question about how this spell would be used. The only problem was how much utility he could squeeze out of revived monsters. Sungjin shouted without hesitation

“Memorize!”

The Spellbook – ‘Rise of the Dead’ emitted black light and burst into flames.

[Spell – Rise of the Dead Memorized.]

[Incantation for the spell is ‘Awaken and become my slave!']

And so Sungjin was now able to use two magic spells.

‘I think I wouldn’t have any trouble clearing the next few chapters with just the sword... but I might as well try the spells out in the next round.’

Once he finished inspecting all his new items from the last raid, Sungjin wanted to stand up and leave. But he was reminded that there was yet another Item which he had received from the raid.

It was the “Moon Specter” hanging from his side. Sungjin pulled the sword out of the scabbard to inspect it.

Moon Specter – Possessed Sword

Legendary Katana – Strength S Dexterity A Mind Power B

Passive Skill

Soul Absorption(II)

Recover 2% of the total Mana per hit

Active Skill

Deathly Wail(IV)

A ghost will induce fear to all nearby creatures. Cooldown 10 minutes

Katana imbued with the power of ghosts. It is unknown if the vengeful spirit was originally the owner of the Katana, or if the soul became vengeful upon being slain by the Katana.

‘Deathly Wail... it was much more powerful than I expected.

The effectiveness of the skill was awe inspiring.

It caused fear to all beings (even undead) within 20 meters distance. It was like obtaining another ‘ace in the hole card’ like ‘Yanhurat’.

‘And this... doesn’t even have a side effect...’

It was a skill well suited for a legendary class item.

The status boost on this sword was slightly lower than the “Blood Vengeance”, but Sungjin already had extremely high number of points invested in Strength and Dexterity compared to the chapter he was in, Enough that even boss monsters were in danger of being instant-killed by so much as grazing them with his sword.

The B rank damage boost attached to Mind Power was quite good. Especially if Sungjin starts using Magic spells, he will need to raise Mind Power; Being able to improve damage by boosting Mind Power was definitely a big advantage.

The passive ‘Soul Absorption’ was also great.

‘Legendary sure deserves its reputation.’

After taking a moment to appreciate the blue glow of the Katana, Sungjin emptied his teacup and stood up.

“Thank you for the tea.”

The Fat Panda Xiu Ran came to see him out.

“Be Careful now.”

Sungjin left ‘First Drop’ and headed towards the ‘Last Edge’.

“Welcome, dear Hunter. Ssssss”

As always, Naga Kenneth greeted him. Sungjin asked

“Let me see that crimson Katana... Blood Vengeance again.”

“Understood, Dear Hunter.”

Kenneth entered deeper into the shop and retrieved the ‘Blood Vengeance’ for Sungjin.

“Here is the sword you requested.”

Sungjin gripped the handle of his beloved sword. The handle felt nostalgic.

“But... I don’t think I can use you this time.”

Sungjin apologized to the sword as if it was his lover. He already obtained a Legendary class sword “Moon Specter”; Purchasing ‘Blood Vengeance’ was too inefficient to justify.

It would have been great if Sungjin was able to Dual Wield, but he was not able to do so. Sungjin was right handed; even if he were to hold a weapon in his left hand, it would become nothing but a useless accessory.

Sungjin returned the ‘Blood Vengeance’ to Kenneth.

“I’m sorry I’m just looking without buying anything.”

Kenneth obediently accepted the Katana from Sungjin and replied.

“It is no problem at all. Do you have any other requests for me?”

At the Naga’s words, Sungjin thought of what other requests Kenneth could complete for him.

“Hey, Operator?”

[Please go on.]

“Give me the Basic Katana.”

Sungjin extracted the first Katana he received from the first Raid.

“I want to sell this.”

“Understood. The Basic katana can be sold for 10 coins. Do you really want to sell it?”

Sungjin nodded. Kenneth handed Sungjin 10 Black Coins. Once his business was complete, Sungjin bid Kenneth goodbye.

“Then, Bye.”

“I hope to see you again, esteemed Hunter. Sssss”

Sungjin put the 10 coins away into the cube and said

“Operator, How many coins do I have?”

[Currently, you have a total of 5978 Black Coins]

‘5978 Coins... I need 4022 more to complete it.’

He no longer had any dilemma about which item to buy first; there was only one choice left.

Sungjin decided to use 'Moon Specter' rather than 'Blood Vengeance' this time. As he walked back to the 'Ninety Nine Nights', Sungjin thought to himself,

'I will obtain 4022 Coins and complete the book with the next chapter.'

*

When Sungjin returned to the Ninety Nine Nights,

"Awoo~"

Cain came to greet him. He was healthy without a trace of injury caused by the Lich's attack. Cain circled around Sungjin a few times, expressing his joy.

Sungjin embraced Cain by his neck and said

"Hello, Cain. You did well earlier. Thank you."

"Woof"

Cain gave a short bark as if he didn't mind. Sungjin and Cain entered into the Ninety Nine Nights together. Like always, the Innkeeper Dalupin greeted them.

“Welcome back Esteemed Hunter.”

Sungjin nodded.

“For today's dinner...”

Sungjin ordered the food that came to his mind immediately.

“One slice of Cheesecake, please. Raw Lamb for Cain too.”

“Understood.”

Moments later, Dalupin returned with a radiating dish of Cheesecake, and a bleeding slab of Lamb meat.

Sungjin picked up his fork to eat, but Dalupin handed him a piece of paper.

“Ah... this is the next Raid's information.”

Sungjin cut the edge of the cheesecake with his fork and placed it into his mouth.

“Put it on the table. I will take a look after dinner.”

“Understood.”

Dalupin placed the piece of paper down next to Sungjin’s plate. Sungjin glanced at the paper.

‘Information regarding Giant’s Canyon.’

He only checked the title,

‘Order is still the same.’

And resumed eating his cake. The cake melted in his mouth, and each bite spread delicious cheesy flavor and aroma across his taste buds.

Translator’s Note

Reference to Frozen. Basically he got Elsa’s ice cape. (the glittery thing she summons)

Chapter 023 - Giant's Canyon (1)

Next morning, Sungjin came down to 'Ninety Nine Nights' earlier than usual. Dalupin greeted him

“Good morning Sir, did you sleep well? You're up much earlier than usual.”

Sungjin nodded and then replied.

“I slept well.”

“What would you like for breakfast?”

“Baguette made into a sandwich with vegetables and bacon. One cup of Americano Espresso and something for Cain as well.”

“Understood.”

Dalupin acknowledged Sungjin's request with a bow. But before he returned to the kitchen, Sungjin interrupted him.

“Ah, before you get me breakfast, would you mind getting pen and paper for me please?”

Dalupin obliged and brought him pen and paper.

“Thank you.”

After receiving the writing tools, Sungjin asked the Operator

“Operator, show me my status window.”

The Cube displayed a hologram in front of Sungjin.

Title: Master Hunter

HP: 10600 MP: 220

Strength: 1186 912 (+274)

Dexterity: 1421 1093 (+328)

Endurance: 1060 815 (+245)

Magic Power: 18 14 (+4)

Mind Power: 22 17 (+5)

Unallocated Points: 3080

Sungjin wrote at the top of the page

‘3080’

After writing down his available stat points, he wrote the totals

of his current Strength and Dex.

‘1186, 1421...’

These numbers represented his allocated points plus the 30% buff due to the Master Hunter title. In truth, with these stats, he would have no trouble clearing the next 2~3 chapters.

His status points surpassed a thousand, plus with the S rank (x2.0) damage boost to strength and the A rank (x1.5) damage boost to Dexterity from ‘Moon Specter’, and effects of the ‘Elite Samurai’ title...

Sungjin already had enough damage to one shot even hidden bosses, and enough speed to dodge every strike. It was proven in the previous raid against ‘Gravekeeper Oryx’.

‘Well, advantage is advantage...’

So Sungjin wrote the following next to both Strength and Dex.

‘+1000’

He didn’t need them immediately, but there were stronger enemies the further he progressed through the Raids. There was a need to invest into his Strength and Dexterity regularly and consistently.

Even if he starts using Magic, Swordsmanship was the basis of his power; He needed to maintain its power at absolutely domineering levels.

The next stat he looked at was the Endurance. He didn't need this immediately at all. Sungjin had never needed it so far.

There was only one case where he was hit, and even then, Cain blocked most of the damage for him.

The only time he lost any significant HP was due to the side effect of 'Yanhurat's' 'Zealot' mode.

'But...'

He wrote the following next to Endurance.

'+500'

Sungjin had fought every boss until the very end and knew how to deal with all of them. But he had not even seen most of the hidden bosses yet.

There was always a chance that any one of them could attack using dangerous magic or abilities he's never seen before; he needed to have some form of failsafe put in place ahead of time.

The remaining points were now 580. As a test, Sungjin decided to

invest these points into ‘Magic Power’ and ‘Mind power’.

The main reason for getting up earlier than usual was so that he could write out the stats on paper and think carefully about them. Especially the two stats related to magic.

“Operator, how is mana consumption calculated?”

[Spell’s Class level x Magic Power]

The information matched what he had heard from other hunters. For example, if he wanted to cast Class 2 ‘Frostbite’, its cost would be calculated as 2 X 18. The total cost of mana was currently 36.

The root of the problem was he needed to figure out a good ratio between Magic Power and Mind Power.

If his Magic power was significantly lower than Mind power, he could use the spells many times, but at very weak levels. Inversely, if his Mind power were significantly lower than Magic power, the effectiveness of each spell would be great, but he could only use it a limited number of times.

The problem was that because Sungjin had never used magic before, so he didn’t know what was the optimal allocation of stats.

‘Since this is my first time...’

Sungjin decided to try out the magic in the next chapter to get a feel of its power.

‘I’ll start out with 1:1 ratio and try out different combinations later. I might have to readjust stat distribution once higher class spells are unlocked.’

Sungjin decided to write ‘+290’ next to Magic Power and Mind Power each.

Once he was finished writing, he noticed the sandwiches set in front of him. He was so focused on the stat distribution that he had not noticed Dalupin come by.

Sungjin picked up the Baguette sandwich and took a bite. While chewing on the sandwich, he began speaking to the Operator.

“Operator. Put 1000 points on Strength, 1000 points on Dexterity, 500 on Endurance, 290 on Magic Power, and 290 on Mind Power.”

[Points have been allocated.]

“Show me my Status window”

Title: Master Hunter

HP: 17100 MP 3990

Strength: 2486 1912 (+574)

Dexterity: 2721 2093 (+628)

Endurance: 1710 1315 (+395)

Magic Power: 395 304 (+91)

Mind Power: 399 307 (+92)

Unallocated points: 0

‘So with Stats like this...’

Sungjin picked up the pen one more time and began to write.

‘Frostbite will take 395×2 , or 790 mana per shot. Rise of the Dead takes 395×4 for 1580. Since total mana is 3990, I can cast Frostbite 5 times, or Rise of the Dead twice without refills...’

It was enough for trying out magic for the next round. And if he wanted then he could use Lich’s Finger and Moon Specter to recover lost Mana if need be.

For now, it was more important to get used to casting spells than checking the spell’s effectiveness. When Sungjin finished his calculations, the Operator gave an announcement.

[Raid will begin in 30 minutes.]

Sungjin spent the remaining time leisurely enjoying breakfast in the inn. Soon, he was teleported away, to ‘Giant’s Canyon’.

*

The sun was setting in the west, its crimson lights dyeing the world red. The tall canyon walls which stood on either side, with rays of lights falling exactly down the middle, illuminating the dry cracked ground.

The place Sungjin was teleported to was an enormous Canyon. The Operator began her announcement.

[Welcome to Giant’s Canyon]

[Where races of Giants gather and live together.]

[Please be warned: Giants are as dangerous]

[As they are large.]

Sungjin looked around without much care. The Grand Canyon in America would probably look something like this. Although he’s never actually been there himself.

[Synchronizing Hunters]

To be fair, Sungjin no longer worried about who were going to be his teammates; He had enough stat points to clear the next three chapters alone safely within the time limit.

“Yawn~”

Sungjin let out a yawn. Waking up earlier than usual to do the stat distribution made him drowsy. Blinking away tears that came out from the yawn, Sungjin checked the titles first.

‘Guardian, Assassin, Mid-level Spearman’

The titles were all somewhat decent; only the strong could move forward and survive.

Sungjin were reading the titles with half closed eyes. But, the last title

‘Elite Sniper’

‘What?!’

Sungjin’s eyes grew wide in surprise. His head snapped down to look at the owner. And he was surprised once more; the ‘Elite Sniper’ had shoulder length hair.

‘Woman?’

It was impressive for anyone to have achieved the rank of Elite Sniper already. (Translator note). And a woman at that. Furthermore, a beauty.

The Asiatic trademark of straight black hair ran down slightly past her shoulders. She wore no makeup over her pure white face.

Sharp eyes and a high nose with a cool visage, as well as slender body devoid of excess fats, she exuded feminine beauty. It goes without saying she must have regularly exercised to achieve such healthy and athletic body conformation.

Sungjin stared at her for a moment. For some reason, she looked familiar.

‘Where did I see her before...?’

The other three hunters also stared at her. Starting from chapter 1, there were an extremely low number of women who could survive until now.

And among them, the Asian ‘Mid-level Spearman’ approached and addressed her.

“Excuse me... Serin Han, right? Archery Gold Medalist Serin Han?” (TL Note#2)

“Ah...”

Sungjin finally recalled her. Archery Gold medalist Serin Han.

She attended the Olympics and won the Individual Gold in Archery. She got additional coverage for her exceptional beauty, even appearing in ‘Sexiest Olympic Star’ rankings, becoming famous overseas.

She even appeared in various Street signs and TV commercials for makeup, so even Sungjin who didn’t regularly watch TV was familiar with her. (TL Note #3)

‘Mid-Level Spearman’ extended his hands to her and greeted her.

“I am... A huge fan. My name is Xian Wang... I saw you often appearing as a cosmetic model in China.”

But Serin crossed her arms, ignoring his outstretched hands, and nodded.

“Ah ok.”

‘Cold.’

It wasn’t like he couldn’t understand her. The raids were barbaric, anarchistic business. There was no guarantee her own teammates wouldn’t turn against her during Raids.

Just like there were no rules against killing other hunters, there were also no rules protecting hunters from each other in ‘other’ ways.

‘But, if she attained the rank Elite Sniper, there shouldn’t be too many men who could easily take her down...’

Sungjin looked around with that in mind. The last two teammates were dark skinned but were also quite different.

The Guardian held a club embedded with nails and held a large shield; like Kultu, he looked like he was from India. While the ‘Assassin’ who held a dagger looked South American.

[Raid will begin in 3 minutes]

Xian Wang clapped his hands upon her announcements.

“Come now, let’s group up. Let’s discuss a strategy on how we’re going to proceed.”

Not a single person responded to him. Not Sungjin “Master Hunter”, nor “Elite Sniper” Serin Han, nor “Guardian”, nor “Assassin”. Sungjin glanced at the other members.

‘It’s a collection of social recluses. I think I like it this way better though...’

No matter who his teammates were, Sungjin's objective did not change.

‘Find the Hidden Piece, Hidden boss, and gather rare loot.’

Now that he thought of it, he had another objective.

‘Ah, and also practice casting magic.’

Sungjin briefly extracted his ‘Moon Specter’ out of the sheath before sliding it back in.

“Click”

It had such a satisfying ring to it. Then, he felt someone's gaze fall upon him. It was Serin Han. She must have seen the otherworldly blue glow on the blade of the sword attached to the world's most beat up sword handle and sheath. She stared at the sword, transfixed for a moment.

When Sungjin turned to look at her, their eyes locked onto each other. And after a brief stare, she turned away. He didn't know if it was because of her pride, but she seemed even more unapproachable.

‘Sigh... I'm not going to do anything to you, no need to act so cold.’

Sungjin instead turned his sights to the sunset in the distance. Raising his arms high, he stretched.

“Yaawn~”

He couldn't help but yawn again. Sungjin twisted his neck and began stretching the rest of his body. There were only 3 minutes left until the Raid began.

(TL Note 1)

Imagine that Sungjin, with 90% contribution in 3 chapters FINALLY qualified for an Elite rank for his weapon. Though titles could have different requirements and order for their attainment but even then it's very impressive for a hunter to gain elite rank title this early in the raids hence Sungjin was astonished upon seeing it.

(TL Note 2)

There is only ONE Han Serin showing up in Korean search engine. And that person is a race car model. [Here is the picture](#). My guess is that Serin Han is based on the author's fantasy that in an alternative world Serin Han actually became an Olympic Gold Medalist for archery.

(TL Note 3)

In Korea, becoming cosmetic model means that you achieved one of the highest (and most rigorous) benchmark for standards of beauty. Having commercials with Cosmetic companies is a huge deal in Korea and basically highlights how beautiful and successful someone is. Another important factor is that almost no one outside of actors or singers become Cosmetic Models; the fact that she became a Cosmetic model as an athlete means she's extraordinarily beautiful, to overcome boundaries of her profession. Her beauty was so great that her posters were even exported to other countries (like China, where Xian was able to see her)

Chapter 024 - Giant's Canyon (2)

Giant's Canyon Raid

Objective – Hunt Ogre Mage 'Pach' and 'Cho'Roch'

Time limit: 1 Hour.

Despite the Operator's mission briefing, the hunters continued to stare among themselves wordlessly. The mood was stiff. Xian Wang clapped his hands one more time to gather their attention.

“Let's introduce ourselves at least. I'll start. My name is Xian Wang, Chinese. I am 30 years old, and I use a spear in fights.”

Again, no one responded. This time, Xian asked Serin to help him out.

“Miss Serin, could you please introduce yourself? I already know, but most people here still don't know who you are...”

Addressed directly, she finally opened her mouth.

“I am Serin Han. Korean.”

With her short reply, the other two men also introduced themselves. Beginning with the Shield wielding Guardian.

“Raj. Indian.”

And the ‘Assassin’ with a dagger

“Santiago. Mexican.”

Santiago took his dagger and cleaned his nails. When the sleeve of his shirt slid down, an intricate tattoo could be seen on his arm.

‘South American Drug Cartel?’

Sungjin kept him in mind. In the late game, he had seen many individuals with extremely dark past.

After all, violent individuals were better suited to survive and adapt to danger.

While Sungjin was thinking about this, the rest of the hunters turned to look at him.

“I am K.”

At his response, Xian Wang asked him

“Kei... Kei...? Are you Japanese?”

Sungjin couldn’t help but smile before replying

“Nationality... why does that matter at all?”

Xian Wang answered raising both his hands up.

“Ah, well... I guess it doesn't. Ok then, let's talk about how we're going to fight from this point forward. I use a spear... and I can fight enemies from some distance away.

The Guardian spoke up.

“I have invested heavily into endurance. And I spent all the coins I got until now into armor. I should be able to provide a sturdy shield wall.”

On his belt were several Recovery Potions. He must have done lots of Tanking until now. The next was Santiago.

“I am... experienced with slashing throats with a dagger. I've noticed that all monsters... also have throats.”

There was something incredibly threatening about him. Next was Serin Han.

“...You've probably heard already, but I am an Archery Gold Medalist.”

Last was Sungjin. He thought about what he should say for a

moment, but he got a fun idea.

“I am a mage.”

Everyone looked at him incredulously.

‘I should try one spell before raid begins’

Sungjin aimed away from the hunters and recited an incantation.

“Binding Frost! Frostbite!”

Sungjin’s hand emitted bright blue light, and then a 10 meters squared area of the ground that he indicated froze over. Sungjin inspected the effects of his spell.

It didn’t freeze over much at all. Compared to the Chapter 3 Raid boss Lich, the effective area was tiny.

‘I guess it’s because the Magic Power is still fairly low.’

But even though Sungjin thought so

“Wow...”

Someone was amazed. It was likely his first time seeing a hunter use magic. The average hunter was not in a position to use magic

by the start of Chapter 4.

‘Well... I think at least ‘one other’ should have been able to already by this point...’

An old teammate from his past life came to mind. Sungjin withdrew the hand he cast the spell from.

“As you can see, I am a mage. I can cast a few spells to assist the team.

“I see! Then... what about that sword...?”

Xian Wang pointed at ‘Moon Specter’ as he asked. Sungjin lifted up his sword as he replied.

“I just picked this up from the ground along the way. I thought I should have something in my hand just in case.”

It wasn’t completely a lie. It was true that he did pick up the sword along the way. Xian Wang nodded, accepting Sungjin’s explanation.

‘Moon Specter’ looked so shabby on the outside that nobody doubted him. Xian Wang clapped yet again as he tried to gather attention.

“Ok good. We have an Archery Gold medalist... and also a Mage.

The team looks really strong this time.”

Everyone turned to look at Sungjin. Only Serin Han gave him disapproving looks, as she was the only one who had witnessed the blue glow of the ‘Moon Specter’.

“Let’s avoid useless deaths and get to the end together.”

The ‘Guardian’ nodded in agreement.

“Got it. Let’s all work hard together.”

Sungjin debated on running off by himself from the start, but he decided to participate with the team at first.

He didn’t care about anyone else, but he wanted to see the skill of ‘Elite Sniper’ Serin Han with his own eyes.

‘Since the raid is 1 hour long... spending 1~2 minutes watching them fight shouldn’t pose a problem’.

Serin took out a hair band and tied up her hair in a ponytail. It appeared that it would get in the way of her archery. She seemed very professional somehow.

‘If she’s really that good... she should have been able to make it to the end last time...’

There was only one of two explanation for why Sungjin had not seen her before; Lack of skill, or bad luck.

The Cube soon gave a countdown.

[Raid will begin in 10 seconds. 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0]

The Raid began, and the five of them entered the Canyon together. At the front stood Raj, and next to him, Santiago.

In the center stood Xian Wang, and at the back stood Serin Han and Sungjin. Sungjin stood at the farthest even behind Serin.

Serin gave him odd looks.

“Mage is supposed to be at the very back.”

To which she replied,

“Liar.”

She turned and walked away. Sungjin wasn't sure if she meant he was lying about being a mage, or that mages stood in the far back.

In the end, Sungjin still followed behind the other four Hunters.

“Here they come! Brace yourselves!”

A large Ogre appeared from afar, wielding a giant hammer. Guardian Raj banged on his shield with his club to attract attention.

“Here! Here! Come and get me!”

The Ogre took his hammer and brought it down upon Raj. Raj pretended to block it with his shield, but took a step back, out of the way of the hammer.

Meanwhile, Xian found an opening to stab the Ogre’s arm with his spear. However, the Ogre was tougher than he looked.

The Ogre grasped the spear and pulled it out of his arm. Then he lifted it up in the air, along with Xian who held onto the spear.

“Uhh.. Uhhhhh...”

While he panicked

‘Pew~’

Serin let loose an arrow. The Arrow embedded itself in one of the Ogre’s eyes.

The Ogre was not stationary; she hit a moving target on a living thing in the middle of combat. It was an amazing accuracy. Sungjin thought to himself

‘She certainly has the skill worthy of a Gold Medalist.’

“Kraaaaah!”

The Ogre covered his eyes in agony and let go of Xian’s spear.

Then, out of nowhere Santiago appeared from behind the Ogre, on his back. He cut open the Carotid Artery.

“Kaa...”

Ogre finally dropped his shield and grasped his bleeding neck. Blood gushed out from between his fingers. It was a bad move.

He was now defenseless. Raj and Xian charged the Ogre. After several strikes, the Ogre finally fell. But,

“Graah!”

Two Ogres began to charge at the group from afar. The Ogres seemed enraged by their comrade’s death and ran rapidly towards the hunters.

‘...I’ll contribute a little too.’

He chanted the incantations.

“Binding Frost! Frostbite!”

The spell was very effective against the Ogres. The Ogres were rooted in place, unable to move forward.

Serin pulled her bow far and aimed up, then recited the incantations.

“Rain of Arrows”

She let go. She had let loose a single arrow, but it started duplicating itself and rained down upon the Ogres en masse.

The Ogres were unable to move away from the arrows and were forced to protect their heads with their bare hands; despite protecting their head, the Ogres still took significant damage from the rain of arrows and became bloodied.

“Whoa...”

Xian Wang exclaimed with his mouth agape.

“What are you doing, all of you?”

Serin’s shout snapped them awake.

“Let’s... Let’s go!”

Xian charged towards the two Ogres. Guardian Raj and Assassin Santiago followed suit. The Ogres were frozen in place, with their arms turned into pin cushions from the arrows.

They were surrounded by the three men and eventually succumbed to their constant attacks. Once the Ogres were finally killed off, Xian took a look around.

He was checking to see if any other Ogres were coming to take revenge. But he didn’t spot any enemy reinforcements. Finally, he let out a long sigh.

“Haa... It is great that the team is so well balanced this time.”

Raj happily agreed.

“Yes, with that Gold Medalist lady and that Mage, I think this chapter will be a breeze.”

Serin Han walked up from behind. She glanced at the fallen Ogres and frowned. And in a barely audible voice, she commented

“...Monsters...Disgusting”

While everyone else was commenting on the fight, Santiago finally spoke up.

“So... Where is the mage?”

The other three people looked around to where the Mage was a few moments ago. He disappeared without a trace.

*

At that moment, Sungjin was charging deeper and deeper into the Canyon.

This chapter, Chapter 4 – ‘Giant’s Canyon’, was inherently different from Chapter 2 or Chapter 3’s dark and open-ended map; The layout was very simple to follow.

If he just follows the one and only path through the Canyon, he is guaranteed to run into the boss ‘Pach and Cho’Roch’ at the other end of it.

‘Swift Paw’s’ sharp claws allowed Sungjin to run past monsters before they could even respond to him; he sprinted through the Canyon at unbelievable speeds.

‘I will kill the boss first, and then search for the ‘hidden boss’ and ‘hidden piece’ in the remaining time.’

That was his plan. While running through the Canyon at breakneck speed, he briefly thought about Serin Han. About the incredibly accurate “Rain of Arrows” she had fired.

‘That was definitely an active skill attached to a Heroic or higher class weapon.’

He didn’t know if it was a Raid reward, or if it was purchased with Coins, but he was certain that her bow was an extremely powerful weapon.

And rightfully so; If she was confident in archery, investing everything into a good bow was the right decision. In any properly functioning party, there should almost never be a situation where the Archer should be facing off a monster at melee.

While Sungjin was running through the Canyon, his running speed suddenly decreased. 30 seconds must have passed.

Because Sungjin slowed down, a nearby two-headed Ettin came running after him.

“Uuuuwaaaagg~”

Seeing the Ettin charge towards him, Sungjin drew the ‘Moon Specter’.

‘I am a mage’

He couldn’t help but smile at his earlier lie. And before he even finished his thoughts, the Ettin was already split in half, falling apart.

And as was his habit, he swung his Katana in the air to throw the blood off of the blade. The Canyon continued on straight ahead.

Ahead of him, he saw countless Ogres, Ettins, and their smaller minions. But Sungjin preferred this.

‘I love this chapter for being so straightforward.’

Sungjin charged ahead, ‘Moon Specter’ drawn and ready.

Chapter 025 - Giant's Canyon (3)

Serin pulled the bow to its limit. And while everyone's gaze was focused on the arrow tip, she let loose the shot.

“Pew~”

The Arrow flew off to the distance with a satisfying sound.

‘Stab’

It pierced through one of the two heads of an Ettin.

“Graah!”

The remaining head scanned its surroundings and then spotted the four hunters. It came charging towards the hunters in anger. Xian Wang shouted in response.

“Pulling successful. Brace yourselves!”

Raj stood in front of the other hunters and shouted while banging on his shield.

“Here! Come at me!”

The Ettin, overflowing with rage, swung his club down as he

charged.

‘I can’t dodge this’

Raj made a judgement call and decided to raise his shield and shout

“Iron wall of Anvil!”

The Lion shaped runes etched into his shield grew bright, and the shield doubled in size; as if hiding Raj behind a castle wall.

When the Ettin’s club collided with the wall, it shattered into pieces after a loud ‘crack’.

Raj flinched slightly, but most of the momentum was cancelled out. Xian Wang stabbed the Ettin, who stood stunned for a moment from the recoil, in the chest.

“Gaaa...”

And Santiago passed by Xian, muttering the words

“Slice and Dice”

The Daggers in his hands began to spin on their own; resembling a drill. Santiago dashed towards the Ettin and violently stabbed the

monster.

The Ettin stepped back in response to Santiago's savage attack

‘Pew~’

The remaining head was hit by an arrow, which penetrated deep into its skull. The Ettin collapsed on the spot.

“Amazing...”

Xian Wang held the spear with his armpits and applauded his teammates. The others in his party were extremely strong.

Raj, who was in charge of the defense of his team, had an excellent Shield, Endurance, and a high number of Recovery Potions.

Santiago was agile and wielded a pair of (Heroic tier or higher) Daggers.

And nothing needed to be said about the Gold Medalist Archer Serin, who controlled the start and the end of every fight with her incredibly accurate snipes.

Despite the fact that the Magician Kei had run off alone without a trace, the raid proceeded without a hitch thanks to the other three hunters.

Xian Wang was able to reach this chapter thanks to being carried to the end of each Raid by exceptionally powerful individuals, but it appeared that teammates in this chapter were better still.

Once the fight was over, Raj stood up with his regular sized shield and asked

“Hey Operator, what’s my current HP?”

[HP: 7932/9200]

“Alright, alert me when it drops below a third of the total health so that I can drink potions.”

[Understood.]

Xian Wang was shocked.

“Your Health is above 9000?”

Raj shrugged.

“I mean... If you’re going to fight as the vanguard, then I think having high health is standard. In exchange, my offensive power is pretty low.”

Serin glanced at him and suggested

“Please make sure you max out your HP before facing the Boss monster. You never know what will happen.”

“Sure thing, pretty lady.”

Raj pretended to stroke his mustache and stole glances at Serin’s figure. Xian didn’t know if the person in question noticed, but he did.

Xian didn’t like it, so he decided to change the subject.

“By the way, I wonder where that Mage has gone off to?”

Santiago twirled his dagger skillfully as he responded.

“Who knows, maybe he got scared and ran off.”

Xian looked back at the direction they came from. He didn’t see anybody. The only thing he saw was piles of dead bodies.

The Canyon was straight as an arrow. The Mage was neither ahead nor behind them; he was nowhere to be seen.

“I’m fairly sure we will be fine at dealing with the normal monsters, but...will it be alright fighting the boss mob with just us

four?”

Xian had raised a reasonable concern to which Raj replied,

“Well... We won't know until we butt heads, right? It's not like we can just run away because we don't think we can do it. You know what this tin can always says.”

Raj tapped the Cube following him.

“Complete the objective. Or you will die.”

Santiago laughed with a high-pitched snicker. Serin didn't respond. Xian let his shoulders drop.

“I guess... you're right after all.”

Xian clapped his hands again.

“Then let's get going.”

Ahead, an Ogre could be seen standing alone.

Once again, everyone's eyes were on Serin's bow and arrow.

‘Pew~’

Serin's arrows flew off into the distance and landed on the Ogre's head. The Ogre turned with the arrow still stuck in his head, glaring at the hunters. Filled with rage, he charged towards them. Raj stepped forward to deal with him.

“Bring it on you beast!”

Raj taunted the Monster to draw attention while the other three worked together to kill it. Using this strategy, the four hunters made their way through the Canyon, slowly and steadily.

*

“Grah!”

The Ogre angrily swung its mace.

‘Woosh, woosh’

The mace swinging in the air sounded threatening. Even Sungjin, who had invested many points into Endurance, would be reduced to a bloody pulp if he took several hits.

‘IF it hits that is.’

Sungjin was no longer at a level where a normal mob could hit him with a simple attack. Sungjin easily dodged the Mace and

swung his 'Moon Specter' twice while evading the attacks.

The Ogre's blood spewed out of an 'X' shaped cut on his chest, and it fell on its back.

“Krah!”

Two more clubs were swung at Sungjin. One was swung by a two-headed Ettin, and the other was swung by a hairy Giant Trogg.

Sungjin crouched and covered himself with Sael's Breath before shouting

“Solidify!”

The moment his command was uttered, the mantle froze in place. The clubs landed on him, but

“Dong~”

A dull sound rang out as if the clubs had hit a thick steel plate. The attack did not hurt Sungjin at all.

‘That's useful.’

Sungjin stood up and faced the enemies. The 'Sael's Breath' resumed fluttering in the wind.

“Kuaaaa!”

“Uraa!”

The two giants lift their clubs again, but Sungjin’s blade flashed twice.

‘Woosh’

‘Woosh’

And the arms holding the clubs were cut off (each with a thickness of a man’s waist.)

The now disarmed monsters tried to swat Sungjin, but it was in vain. They were unable to land a blow on him. In just a few seconds, the two giants let out a deep groan and collapsed.

The combat ended, and so Sungjin hopped on top of the Ogre’s stomach with one leg and surveyed the area.

In the distance, he could see the main boss “Pach and Cho’Roch”. Sungjin checked behind him. He saw nothing but a field of corpses littering the Canyon. Sungjin called to the Operator.

“Operator, time?”

[39 Minutes 58 Seconds remaining.]

‘I already got to the main boss and still have about 40 minutes left... I guess I am in no rush to use the ‘Treasure Hunter’ title anytime soon.’

Sungjin hopped off the stomach of the giant. He held his hand out towards the giant’s corpse and shouted an incantation.

“Awaken and become my slave! Rise of the Dead!”

The Ogre stood up as if nothing had happened and took his place behind Sungjin. Sungjin looked up at him for a moment. It was the first time Sungjin had ever used this spell.

“Operator, how do I control him?”

[Undead monsters raised by “Rise of the Dead” will respond to verbal commands.]

Sungjin decided to try it out.

“Follow me for now”

The Ogre responded in a lower and flatter tone than when he was alive.

“Kraa...”

It followed Sungjin. Very. Slowly. Sungjin looked back and saw that he was walking sluggishly towards him.

“What the... Why is it so slow?”

Sungjin walked back towards the undead Giant. He took a look around. Once he confirmed that all the enemies were dead, he spread his arms wide.

“Hit me”

“Grah~”

The Ogre lifted up his club and swung down. Of course, the movement was extremely slow.

‘Woosh’

Sungjin slightly tilted his body and easily evaded the strike. The Ogre seemed several times slower than when it was alive.

‘... I guess my magic power is too low.’

His spell was nowhere near as powerful as ‘that person’ from his

previous life.

When ‘That person’ cast Rise of the Dead, the resulting undead revived stronger than the original. Sungjin looked over to the boss ‘Pach and Cho’Roch’.

‘I can’t even use it as a meat shield at this level.’

Sungjin pointed at the giant.

“Go back to being dead.”

“Gaah...”

The Ogre zombie fell over again, unmoving. Sungjin stared at the Ogre for a moment.

“Ah, right...”

Sungjin recalled that he had a strange looking bell in his pocket by the name ‘Manyata’. He took it out.

“Operator, does this item affect revived undead as well?”

[It does.]

‘I should try it next time.’

He put the bell back.

“Current mana?”

[MP: 1090/3990]

‘Frostbite’ and ‘Rise of the Dead’ cost 790 and 1580 respectively. He had enough for a Frostbite, and a little short to use Rise of the Dead.

He had reached the boss without considering his MP level.

‘I should try to be better at managing my mana in the future.’

Sungjin pointed at the Ettin’s corpse and said

“Lich’s Beckoning”

The Lich’s Finger, which was previously wrapped around his ring finger, slithered its way up to his knuckle and beckoned twice. A blue mist-like light emerged from the corpse and was sucked into his outstretched finger. Even though the process was meant to help Sungjin recover lost mana, he felt slightly uncomfortable.

“Operator, Mana?”

[MP: 3990/3990]

“Mmm. Ok.”

Sungjin walked towards the hall where the boss was waiting.

‘Pach and Cho’Roch’ was an Ogre with two heads like that of an Ettin. The boss saw the approaching hunter and yelled at him simultaneously.

“Come, Human!” “It’s a Human!”

[Warning! Boss]

[Ogre Mage ‘Pach and Cho’Roch’ has appeared!]

The Cube rang out with an announcement.

“Mage? What do you mean? I am a warrior!” “I am a powerful mage!”

The head holding a large club yelled in anger, and the skinnier head on the left nodded happily.

Sungjin didn’t know who was Pach and who was Cho’Roch. But momentarily, they looked at each other and yelled at the same time.

“What are you talking about? We’re a warrior!” “What the hell are you talking about? We’re obviously a Mage!”

“You should listen to your elders!” “What do you mean? I am older one!”

“What?” “It’s obviously me who’s older. My head came out first!”

Sungjin shook his head.

‘They’re exactly the same as last time... Loud and annoying.’

Sungjin drew out his sword. The boss brothers finally turned their attentions to him and said the same things for the first time.

“You dare challenge us?”

“I’ll Kill you! Puny human!” “I’ll Kill you! Puny human!”

Chapter 026 - Giant's Canyon (4)

“Gruah!”

The Trogg brandished his axe. Raj easily blocked the attack with his shield when

‘Smack’

A stone came flying, hitting him straight on the head.

“Ack!”

Raj cried out in pain and fell over. Santiago, who was attempting to flank the Trogg as usual, noticed that rocks were flying his way as well and backed off.

When the hunters turned to see where the rocks were coming from, they saw two Troggs throwing fist-sized stones towards them.

Serin quickly changed her aim and launched an arrow at the Troggs.

“Kaa!”

The arrow pierced the hand of the Trogg who was about to throw another stone. The Trogg involuntarily dropped the rock which

landed on its feet.

“Kaaack!”

Killing two birds with one stone, Serin nocked another arrow and aimed for the other Trogg. However, the other Trogg threw a rock at Serin before she could react.

The large piece of rock came flying at speeds comparable to her arrow. Serin lowered the bow, but it was too late to move out of the way.

“Miss Serin!”

Xian Wang quickly stood in front of her and tried to deflect the stone.

“Pow”

The stone broke into smaller pieces, and the shards embedded themselves deep into his skin

“Ah...”

Xian Wang was brought to his knees. Serin took the opportunity to nock another arrow. The Trogg hastily stooped down to pick up another stone, but she was faster with her bow.

“Kuraah!”

Serin’s arrow pierced through the Trogg’s head.

The Trogg who had dropped his stone bent down to pick up the rock again, but Serin unleashed two rapid shots back to back; one through the neck and the other through the heart, killing the target. Only the first Trogg remained.

“Iron wall of Anvil!”

“Slice and Dice!”

The last enemy was killed with the cooperation of Santiago and Raj. Raj, who was still bleeding from his head, suggested:

“Let’s take a break for a moment before we continue further.”

The cube announced

[Your HP is now under two-thirds.]

Xian who was also bleeding all over, agreed.

“Yes, that’s a good idea.”

The plan was to take the enemies down one by one, always as a group of four versus one. But because pairs of enemy reinforcements would appear without warning, it had become difficult to make good progress.

Raj uttered a complaint as he drank his potion.

“Just where the hell are those pairs of reinforcements coming from?”

Xian answered while uncorking his potion.

“I thought... I saw them climbing out of some sort of tunnel under the ground.

However, as they were speaking, the Cube suddenly let out an announcement.

[Warning! Boss]

[Ogre mage ‘Pach and Cho’Roch’ has appeared!]

“What?!”

Raj chugged the rest of his potion and stood up, readying his shield.

“Boss?”

Xian also quickly finished his potion and picked up his spear. Santiago got up from his seat taking out his dagger; he scanned the surroundings.

Serin quickly placed an arrow on the bow and took a look around. But nothing, not even minions, could be spotted.

The four hunters tensed up and anxiously looked around, but nothing came to attack them. After five seconds, someone finally grumbled

“Boss appeared? But... Where?”

*

“Fight me, human!”

The Warrior shouted loudly to goad Sungjin. The sheer volume

of the voice might have intimidated an ordinary person. But Sungjin fearlessly charged towards the boss.

‘I don’t know who’s Pach and who’s Cho’Roch, but... Mage first!’

Sungjin dashed towards the Ogre on the left holding the staff. The Mage shouted an incantation.

“Move like the wind! Haste!”

Thanks to the magic, the Ogre moved three... no, four times faster than ordinary Ogres. By the time Sungjin reached the Ogre within melee range, the Ogre had twisted his body to face him with the right side brandishing his weapon.

Sungjin swung his katana, but the ‘Warrior’ moved just as fast to block all his attacks.

‘Clang, clang, clang!’

After three rapid strikes, the Ogre spun around a full rotation, and the mage on the left side charged at him with the staff; an unexpected tactic.

Sungjin leaned far back to dodge the attack. But the warrior Ogre followed up and immediately launched an attack. Sungjin had no choice but to leap back.

And the moment Sungjin retreated, the Mage raised the staff and recited an incantation.

“Incinerate everything in your path! Fireball!”

A gigantic ball of fire came flying towards Sungjin. He leaped back but

“Boom”

He wasn't able to get away far enough from the heatwave resulting from the explosion. Sungjin crouched and covered his body with the 'Ice Queen's Mantle'.

Most of the flames were nullified by the frozen mantle, but Sungjin had lost his HP to an enemy for the first time since the restart. Pach and Cho'Roch laughed at Sungjin, mocking him.

“You think you can take us on alone?” “Stupid! Idiot!”

Sungjin bit his lower lip.

‘A perfect pair...’

The enemy attacked with a staff and a club independent of each other, so predicting their attack was difficult. Adding Magic attacks on top of that made it even more so.

‘It’s definitely hard to defeat it alone.’

So Sungjin took out ‘Grand Kin’s Wooden Figurine’ and threw it in front of him.

“Cain, come out.”

The figurine transformed into a large wolf and took its side by Sungjin. Pach and Cho’Roch laughed again at the new development.

“What a cute puppy!” “So adorable! ADORABLE!”

Sungjin paid them no mind.

“Cain. Get the Left head.”

Upon hearing Sungjin’s instructions, he dashed towards the right to fight the warrior.

“Rawr!”

Cain leaped towards the left head as instructed. But Pach and Cho’Roch were not going to take this standing still.

The Warrior raised his club to counter Sungjin, and the Mage recited an incantation.

“Burn, membrane of flames! Fire Wall!”

Almost instantly, a wall of fire appeared in front of the Ogre. But, Sungjin had moved in faster than the casting of the spell and was already engaging the warrior. Cain, on the other hand, was unable to make it in time and was stuck outside.

Sungjin swung his katana towards the right side but,

“You little...!”

The Warrior swung his metallic club to block his attacks. As expected, the Mage joined in by swinging his staff as well. Sungjin dodged and shook the bell he had prepared in his left hand.

“Ding~”

The small bell rang once, and Sungjin shouted

“Cain!”

Instantly, Cain came bursting through the firewall and launched himself towards the Mage at an unbelievable speed.

Both arms of the Ogre had been extended towards Sungjin; they were defenseless for a moment.

Cain easily found the opportunity to bite and hold onto the Mage's neck. The Mage desperately called to the other head for help.

“Pach!”

“I know!”

Now Sungjin knew who was who. ‘Warrior’ Pach swing his Club to bat Cain away, who was holding onto his throat.

And at that moment, the Warrior had let Sungjin free to act as he wished. Sungjin acted without mercy.

As always, Sungjin aimed to disarm the enemy first; Pach's hands were cut off.

“Ahhh~ Cho'Roch!”

Pach desperately cried out to Cho'Roch for help.

Cho'Roch frantically waved his staff to ward off Sungjin, but there was no way he could face him alone.

Sungjin easily dodged the staff and counter-attacked, wounding the boss in the chest.

“Ack!” “Kaa!”

Both heads screamed out loud as they stumbled backward. Sungjin prepared to finish them off.

“Wind! Push away my...”

Cho’Roch attempted to cast a spell, but

“Rawr!”

Cain once again leaped up and bit him in the throat, preventing him from finishing his incantations. And using the opportunity, Sungjin cut the Giant in half.

“Grauuu...” “Grauuu...”

Pach and Cho’Roch let out strange noises as they fell to the ground, defeated. The Cube announced victory with a jubilant voice.

[Ogre Mage ‘Pach and Cho’Roch’ defeated!]

[Raid Cleared! Returning to the Black Market in 36 Minutes and 32 Seconds]

“Sigh...”

Sungjin let out a sigh and instinctively wiped his brow.

“Eh?”

On his hand was a single bead of sweat; It was the first time he had sweated since the restart; the boss was much harder than he had thought.

No matter how high his stats were, trying to beat a boss designed to be beaten by five people was no easy task.

“Awoo~”

Cain let out a howl as if asking for attention. Sungjin obediently turned his gaze onto him.

“Ah Cain, you did a great job.”

Sungjin put his hands around Cain’s neck and checked his sides. Specifically where he was hit earlier by ‘Pach’s’ club.

“Are you alright?”

Cain gave a short bark to show he was fine.

“Kan”

‘Master’s Bell’ had ‘Invulnerability’ built in. Cain had greatly benefitted this time. Not a single hair was harmed on its body.

Now that he thought of it, Cain had leaped through a solid wall of fire earlier; like some circus lion act. But he had emerged unscathed. Sungjin pet Cain on the head.

“Fire must have been scary to jump through as a wolf... You were really brave, my friend.”

Happy from being praised, Cain let out a long howl.

“Awooo~”

*

[Ogre Mage ‘Pach and Cho’Roch’ defeated!]

[Raid Cleared! Returning to the Black Market in 36 Minutes and 32 Seconds]

The other hunters stopped in their tracks.

“What?”

“The hell...?”

Something strange was going on. The hunters were right to be confused. While hunting normal mobs, the Operator announced that the Boss 'has appeared' and now it announced that the Boss was 'defeated'.

The four people couldn't imagine that the 'Mage' Kei cleared the boss single-handedly; it was against common sense and good reason. Raj double checked with the Operator.

"Wait, Operator, did you just say that we cleared the raid?"

[Yes, that is correct. You will return to the Black Market in 36 Minutes and 24 Seconds.]

Everyone frowned at the Operator's words. Xian Wang pointed forward with his spear and said

"We didn't even get a glimpse of the boss, and yet it was defeated... I don't know what happened, but we should go a bit further in..."

But, the hunters were even more shocked once they entered deeper into the Canyon. In front of them was an entire stretch of canyon floor covered with corpses of giants as far as the eyes could see.

"Whoa..."

Xian looked back at his team. Even the normally calm and

collected Serin looked shocked.

Raj and Santiago exchanged a word between themselves. Xian asked the other three hunters,

“Just what is going... on?”

Raj beckoned Xian to come closer.

“Come over for a second.”

Xian walked over to Raj and Santiago. Once he got close enough, Raj spoke quietly

“Well, we don’t know what happened... but the raid is apparently done and... we got plenty of time. What do you say wanna have some fun?”

‘Fun?’

Xian tilted his head, unsure of what he meant. Raj glanced over to Serin as he continued.

“It won’t be easy, but if we three work together...Hmm?”

Once Xian realized what he was suggesting, he was taken back.

“What the hell are you...”

But he didn't even finish his sentence when

‘Stab’

He heard a noise from below. When Xian looked down, he saw Santiago's dagger embedded deep into his side.

Chapter 027 - Giant's Canyon (5)

Sungjin sheathed the 'Moon Specter'. Since the boss was slain, it was time to begin the search for the hidden pieces.

However, Sungjin was in a dilemma.

'Assuming that the secret place and the hidden boss both exist... when would it be best to use the Treasure Hunter active skill?'

Sungjin did not know which would be more difficult to find, and therefore more 'worth it' to use it for. However, he was interrupted by Cain's howling.

"Awoooo~"

Cain was howling towards the direction of the canyon they had come from.

"What's wrong, Cain?"

Sungjin asked the wolf. Cain flicked his ears as if he was listening to something in the distance. Sungjin stayed silent so that Cain could concentrate. Moments later, Cain looked up at Sungjin and yelped.

"Yip"

He started moving leading the way. Cain seemed to be in a hurry as if it was urgent. Sungjin chased after him quickly.

“What’s going on?”

Sungjin tilted his head in confusion.

‘Did he... spot a hidden piece?’

Just in case, Sungjin gave him the command.

“If you found something, go ahead and show me. You can run as fast as you can manage, I’ll keep up.”

At his command, Cain stopped holding back and bolted off, sprinting ahead.

“Awooo~”

He let out a long howl before running at full speed. Without question, Cain was much faster than Sungjin. In order to catch up with him,

“Swift Paw”

Sungjin used the power of his wolf claws to catch up.

*

Xian unsteadily stepped back. With the dagger still embedded in his abdomen, he swung his spear.

‘Bang’

His spear was blocked by Raj’s sturdy shield. Serin finally noticed that the men had begun to fight amongst themselves and glanced over.

“Excuse me, what’s going on?”

Santiago brandished his other Dagger.

‘Stab’

He stabbed Xian a second time. Serin had fought all this time not batting an eye while killing countless monsters, but once she saw teammates getting hurt, she covered her mouth and gasped.

“What the...”

Xian waved his spear wildly.

“Miss Serin... Run...”

He tried to warn her, but it became his last words. Raj smashed his club over his head, killing Xian.

Once Xian collapsed to the ground, a red light illuminated Raj and Santiago's body for a moment, and a warning blared out from the cube.

[Allied hunters attacked. Entering 'Troll' state.]

[Hunters in 'Troll' state receive 10% penalty to Raid Rewards.]

[And in the event that the Troll is killed by other hunters,]

[It will not inflict the 'Troll' state on the attacker.]

“Eh? Is that so?”

Raj responded back to the cube's announcement. But Santiago gave it no mind.

He was already charging towards Serin.

“Why...”

Serin panicked upon seeing Santiago charge towards her and readied the bow.

‘Pew~’

The arrow landed on his shoulder, but it did not faze him; Santiago continued to run with the arrow sticking out of his shoulders.

The distance between them rapidly decreased. Serin nocked and released another shot, but he was already within arm's reach.

‘Pew~’

Santiago easily evaded the shot and attacked with his dagger; He aimed for her wrist holding the bow.

However, his dagger collided with her bow instead. Serin quickly retreated her arm, but her bow was knocked away from her.

Serin pulled out the dagger she kept on her back, but she was no match for Santiago in a knife fight. She aimed for Santiago's chest and stabbed, but

“Clang!”

With one strike, he knocked the dagger out of her hands and grabbed her by the wrist. Serin tried to put up resistance by hitting Santiago with her bare fist, but it was futile.

Santiago took his dagger and stabbed Serin through the hand.

“Kyaa!”

Santiago followed through with the attack and embedded the dagger deep into the ground, pinning her hand. Once he prevented the use of both of her hands, his eyes betrayed the perverse intentions behind them as he licked his lips.

“Just kill me, you disgusting animal.”

Serin spat insults at him, but he paid her no mind.

Using the other dagger, Santiago nimbly ripped open Serin’s clothes; as if he was very familiar with the process.

“Let me go you bastard!”

Serin wriggled to try and free herself, but due to the dagger, it only caused her to bleed more. Raj stood from the back and spoke as if Serin belonged to him.

“Hey hey, don’t make too many scratches; I don’t like damage.”

Santiago finished up with Serin and began taking off his own clothes. Suddenly

“Roar!”

A wolf appeared out of nowhere and slammed into Santiago; he was caught completely unaware. Santiago was knocked far away by the body slam.

“What?”

Raj shouted out, alarmed. Meanwhile, someone spoke from behind him.

“Whoa whoa, what’s all this?”

Raj jumped up in surprise at the sound of the voice. He looked around. Behind him was the ‘Master Hunter’ Kei who went missing for the entire duration of the raid.

Kei looked at the red outline on Raj and Santiago and commented

“...Troll State?”

That was all he said. He saw Xian’s corpse, and at the now naked Serin on the ground.

“Ah... well, I guess something like this is inevitable.”

Kei spoke to himself and grabbed his extremely shabby looking Katana handle.

“Hmm... It doesn't suit me to act like a knight in shining armor, but I also don't want to run into trolls like you later down the line.”

Anyone who is not an ally is an enemy. Raj quickly made up his mind and attacked Sungjin. Since Kei was a 'mage', Raj wanted to take the initiative before Kei had a chance to cast a spell.

“Die!”

He swung his club at Kei. It should have been easy to take down a mage with brute force. It should have. But.

‘Woosh’

Raj's arm was cut off with a single lazy swing by Kei.

“Ahhh!”

Raj grabbed his arm by the elbow and backed off. He held up his 600 coins worth Shield and retreated backward.

Despite losing one arm, he kept on concentrating. He had tanked for four chapters now.

‘Endure it. I will drink potions and outlast him...’

But interrupting his thoughts, Kei ran towards Raj. Raj hastily activated a skill.

“Iron Wall of Anvil!”

Raj’s shield grew in size and covered him. But

“What is going on?”

Kei cut the Shield in half with a single strike.

Once his trusty shield was cut down so effortlessly, Raj instinctively backed off as he began stuttering.

“You...Mage...You...”

Kei’s sword knew no mercy. He walked up and cut Raj with his sword.

Raj was wearing an intricate chain mail armor, but the Katana cut through all as if they didn’t exist.

‘Chi-chi-chi-chang!’

Along with the chains being cut apart, his skin and bones were cut away as well.

“AHHHHHHHHH!”

Raj let out a loud cry of pain. It was only one blow, but

[Warning! HP is below 10%]

The Operator rang out with a warning. Raj opened his eyes wide in disbelief as he continued to step back.

“My hp is almost 10,000...”

Kei couldn’t help but grin.

“So what? I probably have almost 20,000. Isn’t that right, Operator?”

[Your maximum HP is 17,100.]

Raj’s eyes grew wide even further. The specs were incomparably different. Raj continued to stare, unable to act. Kei spun his katana around.

“I don’t like seeing human blood... but it looks like you guys killed that Chinese guy. You understand that you guys spilt human

blood, right?

Kei was about to finish off Raj with his Katana, but

‘Pew~’

An arrow came and pierced through Raj’s skull between his brows. Raj died before he even realized he was hit.

*

Sungjin lowered his katana and looked behind him. Serin was holding her bow, with a pitiful, pathetic expression on her face.

“Why would you anger a scary lady...?”

Sungjin complained as he took a look around. There was one other troll. But, he was nowhere to be found.

‘Where...?’

A bit further Cain stood, waiting for him. He had ambushed the other troll earlier but was alone for some reason.

Sungjin approached him and asked

“Cain, where did he go?”

But Cain did not answer. Instead, he faced somewhere off in the distance and growled.

“Grrrrr”

Something was wrong. Sungjin inspected Cain’s body. When he looked closer, he saw that there were small cuts around his neck. The wound was not red, but a strange hue of purple.

“Paralysis poison.”

Sungjin got up in anger and looked around. But there was no trace of the troll. He must have poisoned Cain with Paralysis and ran away.

Cain was stuck, unable to move and deeply in pain. Sungjin whispered into Cain’s ears,

“You did well Cain. Go rest at the Inn. I’ll catch up.”

And standing up, he uttered a command.

“Unsummon.”

Cain returned to the form of a small wooden figurine. Sungjin placed the figurine back in his pocket and approached Serin.

Serin was trying to cover herself with the remainder of her clothes while crying. Although she didn't make any noise, hot tears streamed endlessly down her cheeks.

‘Even though you act strong, I guess a woman is a woman after all.’

Sungjin returned the Katana to the sheath and asked her

“Are you okay?”

Serin wordlessly glared at Sungjin as if to declare that all men were the same. Sungjin raised his hands to show he meant no harm.

“Ah, I have no interest in you. But... I have to go searching for something, so I have to leave this place... That guy got away, that Assassin guy. So leaving you alone here is a little...”

Once Sungjin mentioned ‘Assassin’, her eyes instantly teared up. It was inevitable; just moments ago, he had almost managed to rape her. Sungjin scratched his head and continued.

“Well... yeah... To make the long story short, I’m going to go and

look for something so I can't stay here. If you want to follow, I will protect you. You should come with me if it's not too much to ask."

Sungjin headed back towards the canyon. Few steps away, he looked back.

Serin wrapped herself with a ripped shirt and was wordlessly following him. Seeing her, Sungjin thought to himself.

'The consequence of exceptional beauty... Probably... she didn't manage to make it last time because...'

You cannot survive to the end with just skill; this is how the "Raid" works.

Concluding his thoughts, Sungjin resumed his footsteps; to search for the 'Hidden Pieces'

Chapter 028 - Giant's Canyon (6)

Sungjin continuously scanned his surroundings as he progressed through the Canyon. He was searching for a 'hidden piece' while keeping an eye out for the Assassin.

And once in awhile, he looked back to check on Serin who followed from behind. Her cheeks carried traces of tears, but she looked much calmer now.

Of course, because of her earlier 'experience', she kept her bow and arrow at the ready, but she was regaining her usual haughty demeanor. Sungjin stopped to speak to her.

"Excuse me, but..."

Serin bit her lip without replying. She was still extremely weary of Sungjin.

"Did you happen to see anything weird or out of place on your way here?"

Sungjin asked Serin carefully.

"Weird...?"

"Yes. Anything is fine... Did you see anything like that? Something that shouldn't be there, something that seemed odd..."

Like a concealed location...”

Serin answered as if Sungjin’s question was puzzling.

“What do you mean by that? This whole place is filled with nothing but strange things.”

“Excuse me?”

“Hairy monsters, fat pot bellied beasts, two-headed giants.”

“... I mean...”

She was technically correct, so Sungjin didn’t have much in the way of a reply. He decided to change his question instead.

“I don’t mean it in that way. I meant especially strange things. Abnormally powerful beast among beasts, weirder things among weird things. Something that stands out even in this place.”

Serin shook her head.

“I don’t know. I hate being around these monsters; I just wanted to get out of this place as soon as possible. So I focused on nothing but shooting arrows into their heads.”

“...I see.”

Sungjin nodded. In truth, he didn't expect much from her anyway; Even by chapter 10 most people were unaware that 'hidden pieces' existed at all.

'Should I use the 'Treasure Hunter's' active skill...?'

Serin then interrupted Sungjin's thoughts and asked a question.

"Kei... That's a fake name, right? What country are you really from?"

Sungjin shook his head.

"...It doesn't matter. Think what you want."

Sungjin answered half-heartedly. He didn't want to get close to someone who was most likely going to die in the near future.

It always hurts less when a stranger dies compares to when a friend does. This was the reason why Sungjin called himself 'K'.

"It has to be between China, Japan, and Korea."

Sungjin didn't plan on answering. Then,

"Between Kimchi Jjigae and Doenjang Jjigae, which is your

favourite?”

Sungjin instinctively and unintentionally ‘thought’ of the answer. Serin’s sharp eyes did not miss his slight change in behaviour.

“You must be Korean.”

“What?”

“If you were Chinese or Japanese, you probably would have first asked what those were.”

Sungjin thought of saying

‘...I’ve been to Korea before...’

And stopped himself.

‘She’s a smart one.’

Sungjin turned his head halfway and replied,

“I said this before, but what difference does nationality make here?”

But she replied

“It is only right that the one who is saved remembers the name and nationality of the one who saved her.”

Sungjin turned his head all the way back to look at her.

“What?”

She finally replied

“I wanted to say thank you earlier.”

Now that he thought of it, it was the first time she had thanked him. A faint smile appeared on her face, as she slightly lowered her head towards him.

Sungjin was battle hardened and emotionally vacant, but even his long-cold heart was shaken by her beautiful smile.

“Ah well, got it.”

Sungjin intentionally looked away. He then called to the Operator.

“Remaining time?”

[32 minutes 49 seconds]

‘...If I don’t find it within 20 minutes, I will use the Treasure Hunter Active skill.’

Sungjin resumed combing the Canyon.

A long time after, Serin stopped Sungjin.

“Hey.”

Sungjin stopped on the spot. He turned and looked at her.

“What is it?

Serin pointed with her thumb somewhere.

“Isn’t that suspicious?”

Sungjin looked over in the general direction she was pointing towards. There was an ordinary Canyon wall.

“What’s strange about it?”

“Its appearance... Have you ever been to the Grand Canyon?”

Sungjin shook his head. He was an orphan. Poor even among the poor. He had never been out of the country all his life; not even to China or Japan.

“I have. Twice. I lived in America as a child.”

Sungjin nodded. He recalled a news article from the past.

‘Beautiful Archer Serin Han. Born into money and privilege; Father was a major player in the American Finance Industry.’

“The Canyon walls are formed by compacting earth and sediments layer over layer over long periods of time. So typically, there are varieties of colors present on the Canyon wall. But over there...”

Sungjin looked over to the canyon wall again listening to her explanation. Now that she mentioned it, he too noticed the strangeness of that particular part of the wall.

To the left and the right of it, the walls were layered horizontally in a uniform pattern. Only this portion of the canyon wall was different.

At the center, the layers were narrow, and the colors shifted within the layer. The variance of the color within the layer became worse closer to the center.

The way the canyon face was shaped, it stuck out in some parts, and it was indented inward at others. This portion of the wall, however, the outs and ins were too straight, as if designed and cut with precision tools.

“Wait... this looks like...”

Sungjin had tried to touch the canyon wall. But cracks appeared

on the wall, and a slick white surface became visible.

‘What is this, a slime?’

He thought for a moment. But in the middle of the white surface, a large black pupil rotated to look at him.

“Eye?”

Sungjin cried out in shock. And at the same time, the earth shook tremendously. The Operator gave out an announcement.

[Warning! Hidden boss]

[King of Giants ‘Cyclops’ has appeared!]

“What does she mean, ‘Hidden Boss’?”

Serin asked from behind, but Sungjin didn’t answer. One side of the canyon wall rose up, and a hand emerged from within. Serin looked up at the gigantic hand and gasped.

“My goodness...”

The gargantuan hand grasped the top of the canyon wall.

‘Rumble’

The ground began to shake again. Along with the earth shattering rumble and quake, the ‘Hidden Boss’ began to show itself.

The boss’s stature made the Ogres, Ettins, and Trolls look like little children’s toys.

Just looking up at the boss, it was easily as tall as a ten storey building. Sungjin had seen many gigantic bosses in later chapters, but never one as tall as this.

The giant stood up by leaning on the canyon cliff wall and blinked its huge eye a few times. It looked down upon Sungjin and let out a mighty roar.

“Kruuuuah!”

The earth itself trembled at its monstrous roar.

‘Pew~’

A familiar sound rang out from behind, and he saw an arrow zip through the air. Serin shot an arrow up towards the giant’s head. Of course, the target was the lone eye.

Taking out its eye would make the hunt comparatively easy. But once the arrow reached about its chest height,

“Wragh!”

The giant slapped the arrow out of the air. The height of the Giant was about 25~30 meters. No matter how large the Cyclop’s eyes were, it was a difficult height to reach with the arrow. Serin complained under her breath.

“Just what the heck is that thing...”

She looked discouraged. That was probably the normal reaction for this moment. Even though she had overcome large wolves, undead monsters, and other nightmarish creatures, she had never seen anything so seemingly unsurmountable.

Sungjin drew out his blade and shouted

“Stay back for a bit”

And charged at the giant.

‘Let’s test the waters.’

The Cyclops raised its foot when it noticed Sungjin run towards it. A huge shadow appeared on and around Sungjin.

Sungjin quickly moved out of the shadow of the colossus. Its speed was nothing extraordinary, but due to its enormous size and mass, improperly dodging would result in becoming an instant

pancake.

‘Booom’

The foot landed where Sungjin stood moments before. Turning around, Sungjin swung his katana at one of the toes in front of him.

“Graagh!”

Each time it cried out, the earth itself shook along with it.

‘Is it taking any damage?’

He asked himself. Another shadow appeared on top of Sungjin. He tumbled backwards.

‘Boom’

A large fist punched the earth where he was moments before. Sungjin prepared to counter attack when the fist opened up, and the giant tried to catch and grab Sungjin.

Sungjin couldn’t avoid it. He quickly wrapped the Mantle around himself and shouted

“Solidify!”

“Crack!” ‘shatter’

Sael’s Breath shattered upon contact with the Giant’s hand. Having blocked the Giant’s attack with the Mantle, Sungjin spun around and swung his Katana towards the hand.

“Kaaaa!”

The middle finger was cut deep by the Katana. It evidently hurt a great deal. The Cyclops began stomping the ground chaotically in anger. Sungjin rapidly dodged the indiscriminate attack with great dexterity. Even while doing so, he thought to himself.

‘...It’s not a boss I can easily kill even with high stats. It’s going to take more than one or two shots.’

And that was the truth. No matter how powerful Sungjin and his Katana was, it was only as large as a needle in comparison to the massive giant. The only parts of its body Sungjin could destroy in one hit was fingers or toes.

‘Climb the thing and make a lethal strike.’

Sungjin made up his mind and began to put his plan into action. He approached the giant to lure an attack. It first raised its foot.

‘Feet are no good.’

Sungjin dodged the foot for now. And as a follow-up, a slightly smaller shadow appeared around Sungjin.

Without a doubt, this was the fist. Sungjin intentionally dodged it by a hair.

“Boom!”

The fist landed on the ground close by. Instead of swinging his sword, he jumped up and held onto the hand.

And without realizing that Sungjin had hitched a ride on his wrist, the Giant raised his hands as normal.

Along the way up, The Giant turned his attention to his hand. The two stared at each other.

‘Danger.’

Sungjin felt threatened, and quickly stabbed ‘Moon Specter’ deep into the Giant’s hand.

“Grrrr~”

The giant cried out in pain as if it was stung by a bee. It angrily waved its arms about, to throw Sungjin off of him. Sungjin was thrashed about violently.

It was a dangerous moment for him. If he let go of ‘Moon Specter’, then he would be flung off far into the distance like an ant. The Giant only increased the intensity of which it swung its arm.

‘If this keeps up...’

While Sungjin was flailing in the air, he heard someone calling for him.

“Kei!”

Despite the shaking, he still looked towards the source of the voice. Serin had climbed to the top of the canyon cliff and was aiming towards the giant with her bow and arrow.

She let loose an arrow aimed at its eye.

“Rain of Arrows”

The arrows multiplied in the air and flew towards the Giant’s face. Every single one of them hit the mark; it was inevitable due to the large size of her target.

In just a moment, dozens of arrows embedded themselves deep into the Giant’s face.

“Graaagh!”

The Cyclops screamed out in pain and instinctively used its hands to cover its face from the arrows. And with it, Sungjin was brought to his target.

Sungjin pulled out the ‘Moon Specter’ from the wrist of the Cyclops and held it in both hands. And once he grew close enough, he pushed himself off from the hand launching himself towards the head.

“Yargh!”

Sungjin yelled out loud as he sailed through the air, Katana pointed straight at the eye. And just like that, Sungjin impaled the ‘Moon Specter’ deep into the Cyclop’s eye.

Chapter 029 – Giant’s Canyon (7)

Sungjin held onto the ‘Moon Specter’ and dragged his blade through the Cyclop’s flesh; from the giant’s lone eye, through the nose, past the jaws, and until it sliced through and emerged from the underside of the chin.

Once Sungjin separated the giant’s face in half, he impaled the blade into the Cyclop’s chest and continued to carve up its body as he made his way down.

“Graaagh...”

The Giant let out cries of agony through its now separated mouth. Once Sungjin reached its abdomen, the Cube announced their victory.

[Hidden Boss ‘King of Giants’]

[Cyclops Cleared!]

However, Sungjin did not retract his blade just yet; He was still too high up to jump down safely. Controlling the ‘Moon Specter’s’ depth in the giant’s flesh to adjust his falling speed, Sungjin slowly made his way down the giant like a skier.

Once he was at a reasonable height, Sungjin pulled the sword out of the Giant and leapt off. After a few rotations in the air, Sungjin

landed on the Canyon floor safely. The giant slowly collapsed over the side of the Canyon wall.

‘Rumble rumble rumble rumble’

Along with a deafening sound of shattered canyon wall, large volumes of sand and dirt rained down from above. The cloud of dust which followed obscured the vision and blocked the airways.

“Cough! Cough!”

Sungjin couldn’t help but begin to cough. Covering his nose and mouth with his hands, he slowly walked out of the area. Meanwhile, the Operator announced

[Raid 100% complete!]

[However, there is an active ‘Troll’ in the party.]

[Raid reward will be postponed until the troll, or the other members are eliminated]

[or if the timer runs out.]

Sungjin, who had relaxed his guard once the Hidden Boss was eliminated, quickly realized his oversight.

‘The Assassin!’

Even up until the boss showed himself, he was on alert for the assassin, but once the fight began, he had completely forgotten about him. Sungjin pulled the 'Moon Specter' out again and walked through the dust cloud.

As time passed, the sandstorm settled down. Little by little the air cleared up, and he could see again. In the distance, he heard Serin's voice.

"Kei!"

It was hard to hear through the dust, but she sounded nervous. Sungjin made his way towards the source of her voice.

"Se...Serin! Cough! Serin!"

In the distance, he could see someone standing. Sungjin made his way towards the figure, but Santiago's voice stopped him in his tracks.

"Hey, Mage. stop right there, or I will kill this girl."

Sungjin had no choice but to stop.

Once the dust settled a bit more, he was able to see what was going on.

Santiago held a dagger to Serin's neck and was glaring at him.

“I guess I should call you Swordsman instead. I saw everything. Drop your sword.”

Sungjin paused to take a look at Santiago, and then at Serin who was held hostage. He took a moment to think.

‘What should I do?’

Seeing that Sungjin still held onto his Katana, Santiago threatened him further.

“No tricks. She’s one slice away from death. I’ve made sure of that.”

There was one dagger impaled into Serin’s side. She was bleeding out from the wound. Sungjin yelled to calm Santiago down.

“I got it I got it. I’ll put down the sword. Please let her go.”

Slowly and cautiously, Sungjin placed the ‘Moon Specter’ back into the scabbard. And he untied the scabbard from his side. Pretending to drop it, he rapidly drew the blade out and shouted

“Deathly wail!”

The ‘Moon Specter’ glowed bright blue.

“KYAAAAAAAAAAAA!”

A hell-like screech filled the air, reverberating around the canyon. Sungjin immediately charged forward.

“Uhh...uh...”

Santiago lost his grip on Serin and took an involuntary step back. Sungjin rushed towards him. Santiago waved his dagger towards Sungjin wildly but

“Clang clang!”

In just two swings, Santiago’s daggers were knocked away from his hands. Sungjin kicked his undefended chest.

‘Pow’

He fell on his backside. Sungjin stared at him. Santiago’s eyes were filled with terror, for one reason or another.

“Ahh...Ahh...”

Without getting up, Santiago tried to crawl away as fast as he could. Sungjin walked up to him and cut off both of his feet.

“Ahhh!”

Santiago let out a long cry of agony. Sungjin emotionlessly told him

“This is for Cain.”

Sungjin pointed his sword towards Santiago as he walked over. Now certain that he was going to die, Santiago began to beg for his life.

“Mercy... Mercy! Please!”

Santiago begged while holding his hands together in a prayer. This helped Sungjin see the fancy tattoo covering Santiago’s arm.

Sungjin held up the ‘Moon Specter’ towards his face and said

“I know scum like you. On Earth, before we were sent here, you probably did these kinds of things without hesitation. Of course, looking at things from ‘this’ angle.”

Sungjin did not attack him with his sword and kept on talking.

“You probably looked down at your victims, who were helpless and begged for mercy. I could have killed you many times until now. The reason why I am waiting...”

“Anything but my life”

Santiago continued to beg.

“This is it. I wanted you to experience this. The terror you inflicted on your victims until now.”

Sungjin counted 5 seconds in his mind. Santiago tried to escape, but his feet were cut off. He was able to crawl away slowly with his hands, but it didn't get him far.

“I think that's enough for introspection.”

Sungjin took a single step forward and swung his sword.

“Die.”

‘Shing’

Santiago's head flew off and landed some distance away. As was his habit, Sungjin swung his Katana once to fling the blood off of the blade.

Santiago's blood splattered on the ground, and Sungjin returned the blade to its sheath. Turning around, he left to attend to Serin.

Serin was trembling while tightly holding herself. If anything

could be described as a side effect of “Deathly Wail”, it was that it also affected allies equally. Sungjin approached her and said

“Don’t be afraid Miss Serin. It’s okay. That thing was not real... it’s fake.”

Serin looked up towards Sungjin and asked

“And...him?”

Sungjin tilted his head towards where Santiago’s corpse lay. She uneasily turned her gaze towards the direction he indicated. In the distance, she saw Santiago’s severed head.

Serin returned her gaze to Sungjin and said

“Thank you... Really Thank you, Kei.”

Sungjin nodded to acknowledge her expression of gratitude and moved away from her to give her some privacy; so that she could have time to calm herself down. The Cube broke the silence.

[All ‘Trolls’ in the party eliminated.]

[Distributing Raid reward]

He didn’t find the ‘Hidden Piece’ yet, and the distribution already

began. It was okay since he could still go off to search once the distribution was over.

[Calculating Rewards Earned.]

[Monsters Slain. Ogres: 30. Trogg: 20. Ettin: 10. Total 3200 points.]

[Boss Monster Slain: Ogre Mage 'Pach and Cho'Roch': 400 points.]

[Hidden Boss King of Giants 'Cyclops': 400 points.]

[Final point count: 4000 Points. Distributing points.]

First up was Serin.

[Your contribution is 29.5%. 1180 Stat points, 1180 Black Coins awarded. Raid Clear Bonus 1000 Stat points and 1000 Black Coins awarded. Distributing 2180 Stat points and 2180 Black Coins.]

Her contribution points were enormous compared to the points Sungjin's former teammates had received. But it made sense, since she almost always landed every shot she fired, and the other three perished during PvP. Next up was Sungjin.

[Your contribution is 70.5%. 2820 Stat points, 2820 Black Coins awarded. Raid Clear Bonus 1000 Stat points and 1000 Black Coins awarded. Item effect 'Additional 10% gained' activated. Distributing 3820 Stat points and 4202 Black Coins.]

Sungjin thought to himself.

‘4202... I almost didn’t make it.’

He needed 4022 coins to complete the book. Without the Heart of Gold passive, he would have fallen short.

[And now we will distribute the items.]

Of course, it began with Serin since she had fewer contribution points.

[Eye of the Cyclops – Strength of the Giants]

[Recovery Potion – Small x4]

Next up was Sungjin. Despite having been through this process numerous times, Sungjin still looked forward to seeing what he’s earned.

[Manta – Cho’Roch’s Staff]

[Kamram – Siamese Twin’s Ring]

[Recovery Potion – Small x3]

[Spell Book – Fireball]

And it ended here. Although it usually gave out three Heroic Items.

‘Why? Why did I only get two?’

Sungjin complained internally. But the Operator was not done.

[Congratulations! You obtained a Legendary item ‘Kamram – Siamese Twin’s Ring’!]

‘Legendary Item?!’

The Operator always announced each legendary item loot received. Sungjin instantly forgot about his complaint and eagerly picked up the ring that appeared before him.

At the center of the ring were two crimson gems; stuck together like Siamese twins.

‘What is this?’

He wanted to ask, but the distribution was not over.

[Last but not the least, you will be awarded titles you’ve earned on this raid.]

One more time, Serin was first.

[Head Hunter – When striking the enemy on the head with an arrow, Increase damage dealt by 40%]

It was a great title. If you considered her skill, it was no different from having permanent 40% damage boost at all times. Next up was Sungjin.

[Adjudicator – When killing Party members who entered the ‘Troll’ state, obtain two of their equipped items.]

‘Huh?’

He didn’t even imagine that such a title existed.

‘...is it because I killed two trolls in one raid?’

In Sungjin’s previous life, he had exceptionally good luck with teammates. He almost never encountered a ‘Troll’, so this title would have been impossible to earn for him.

He also never saw anyone walking around with it. To be fair, this was a hard title to justify equipping.

In a raid where your life was always on the line, there was no reason to keep this title equipped in case of a troll that may or may not appear.

No, if a troll were to appear, it usually meant the party would be wiped out.

‘Well, since it’s being given to me, I’ll accept it gratefully.’

Once the rewards were distributed, Serin approached Sungjin.

“Good work, Master Hunter K. Your skill lives up to your title.”

Sungjin nodded.

“Serin, you too... well, Good work on overcoming this chapter, you know, after everything that happened.”

Sungjin kicked himself inside for mentioning ‘that’. It would have probably been better not to have mentioned it at all.

But luckily, Serin seemed to take it well.

“It’s okay. To be fair... something similar happened to me in the last chapter as well.”

Listening to her frankly say that, Sungjin was at a loss for words. There was a reason why so few women survived to later stages of the Raids.

“At that time, I took care of the situation with my bow, but this time... Anyway, thank you so much, Kei.”

Sungjin wordlessly nodded. He felt saying anything now to her was improper. The Operator informed them their remaining time.

[Returning to the Black Market in 28 Minutes and 48 Seconds.]

There was still lots of time left. But there was one more thing Sungjin had to do; Searching for the ‘Hidden Piece’. Sungjin told the Operator,

“I want to use the ‘Treasure Hunter’ active skill. Please tell me the hint about the hidden location on this map.”

Chapter 030 – Giant's Canyon (8)

The Operator recited a verse.

[Wandering merchant from far away land]
[Crossing the Canyon, treasure in hand]
[Caught by Giants and hung by his toes]
[Giants know not of the value he towed]
[‘Eating’ is the most valuable thing that they know]

Sungjin deliberated over the verses. The verse hinted at a hidden location, but there was no direct hint about where that might be.

“...tell me again.”

After the second time, Sungjin figured out that there were two hints about the location. “Hung by his toes” and “Eating”.

‘Upside down... for eating...’

Somewhere the Giants would cook... Somewhere suitable to make food. Sungjin searched his memories.

‘Oh wait a minute...’

Now that he thought of it, he recalled seeing a crock pot. One large enough to fit someone in it.

‘Where was that again?’

It was somewhere within the Canyon; he was sure of it. Sungjin asked Serin who stood next to him.

“Miss Serin, do you remember seeing a Gigantic Crock Pot?”

“A crock pot?”

“Yeah, not a normal sized one, something large enough for a grown man to fit in. Something really large.”

Serin shook her head.

“No, I don’t remember seeing something like that. If I saw something that strange, I would remember.”

‘Which means that I had seen it in the later half of the Canyon’.

Sungjin made a deduction. Serin had probably only been halfway through the Canyon. She couldn’t possibly have seen anything that appeared in the later portions of the Canyon.

Once he made up his mind, Sungjin turned to search for the

crock pot. But Serin stopped him to ask

“Kei, where are you going?”

“Ah... that...”

Sungjin hesitated. He didn't feel comfortable telling her about the existence of 'Hidden Pieces'. But he decided to say

“I have something to find. A hidden element.”

He explained her the truth. She was already extremely grateful to Sungjin for saving her. He believed that she would not request anything unreasonable of him even if they did find the treasure.

“Hidden elements?”

“Yes. Just like the secret boss we just fought, there are also secret treasures hidden on each map.”

Serin's eyes grew wide with surprise.

“Really?”

“Yes. So I am going to go and search for it. You are welcome to stay here and rest until you return to the black market. We already hit 100% raid completion, so there are no more mobs to be found

on the map.”

Sungjin wanted to turn and leave as soon as he was done with his explanation, but Serin replied

“Let’s go together. I don’t have anything better to do anyway... and staying with that corpse alone feels... bad.”

Serin indicated towards Santiago’s corpse which was lying a slight distance away.

‘Ah... Yeah, that would be bad for her.’

Sungjin nodded slightly and respected her decision. Either way, having two pairs of eyes searching for the hidden item was better than one.

She already proved useful in finding the hidden boss. Sungjin and Serin began to walk deeper into the Canyon one more time.

They walked for a while without speaking. But surprisingly, it was the proud Serin who broke the silence.

“Excuse me... are hidden bosses... in every round?”

She became more chatty.

“Yes.”

“And you hunted them each time?”

“...Yes.”

“How... Finding them is one thing, but didn’t you fear death? Don’t they scare you?”

Sungjin shrugged.

“As you can see... if you can’t grow stronger in these raids, you can’t survive. So... I have to work harder and push myself further; to be stronger.”

“Kei, you’re already plenty strong though.”

Sungjin did not reply. He didn’t want to tell her that later chapters fielded terrible monsters.

Instead, he decided to give her a warning.

“Miss Serin, please get as strong as you possibly can be. That’s how you get to live longer.”

“I am trying my best each round... so does that mean I should be trying to find and defeat the hidden boss each round?”

“That’s...”

Sungjin was caught in a dilemma, just like in the case with Hiro. Telling her ‘yes’ entailed too many risks.

“A decision like that... make the call after you’ve seriously considered your situation.”

“Like how?”

“You should only consider attempting the hidden boss if all of the following are true: All 5 party members are exceptionally powerful and talented. Your team works together very well and stays coordinated. No internal strife occurred after killing the final boss. Only if all of these are true, you can consider attempting the hidden boss. Otherwise, everyone is going to die.”

Sungjin told her something similar to what he had said to Hiro. Serin carefully considered his words.

“Thank you for letting me know. But...”

Her words trailed off. Sungjin understood why. She even said she experienced ‘something similar’ in previous rounds.

Her exceptional beauty was interfering with her chances of survival. But then

‘Ah... that’s right.’

Sungjin recalled something and decided to tell her.

“Um... In the black market, you can find a Mask shop.”

“Mask...shop...?”

“Yes. If you go there, you will be able to purchase masks that temporarily changes your appearance. Please go there. In my opinion, you are...”

‘Far too beautiful.’

Was what Sungjin wanted to say, but he felt bashful and changed his words.

“Going to find it useful.”

Serin nodded.

“I understand. Thank you for all your help, Kei.”

And with her words of gratitude, she gave a radiant smile quite unlike her usual cold self.

“...Sure.”

Sungjin intentionally replied back halfheartedly. And he stole a glance at her.

‘This lady... if luck would follow could be a strong candidate for the final party members...’

It was going to be chapter 5 soon. The initial stages of the raids were going to be over soon, and Sungjin was slowly making plans to prepare for the future.

‘Last members; Final 5.’

Being included in the final five was beyond a doubt for Sungjin. He became greatly overpowered thanks to the ‘Restart’.

The problem was the other four individuals.

No matter how strong an individual was, there was no way one person could complete the raid all alone. These ‘Raids’ were designed to be beaten with the cooperation of 5 people.

Cooperation, as chapters continue, becomes increasingly important in making meaningful progress. It was a good idea to start considering about who had the potential to become the final team members from now on.

There are two main factors in becoming one of the final five. One is exceptional skill, and second is unbreakable trust.

Sungjin had no doubts as to her skill. She had won the Gold medal in Olympics; it proved that she was the best archer among humans. And Sungjin saw her skills first hand.

And unlike her initial cold demeanor, she was a respectable and upright human being. Most importantly, she already deeply trusted him. Thinking thus far, Sungjin continued to speak.

“As you might have noticed... as the ‘Raids’ continue to progress, an incredible number of people will perish along the way.”

Serin’s face expression hardened immediately, and she nodded nervously.

“So... even though the raids began with all of humanity participating, the number of people will...”

Sungjin was about to say “continue to dwindle until there are only five people remaining” but he changed his verbiage slightly.

“Probably dwindle until there are only five people remaining at the end. You understand this much, right?”

Serin nodded slightly.

“Yes... That would make sense if these ‘raids’ continue without an end.”

“If that time comes and only five are remaining, it is best if all five are dependable people, in skill and in trust, right?”

“I think so. I get how people with great skill might be able to survive until the end, but isn’t it impossible to guarantee that each person, in the end, is trustworthy?”

Sungjin thought of what she had said. It was technically correct. But...

‘If I wanted, I could ‘pick’ at least few of the members of the Final Five...’

Sungjin knew he had some level of control over the membership; he had overwhelming advantage of skill, information, and stat points above other hunters.

Manipulating not only the outcome of raids but also the process was possible to a certain extent. While Sungjin was lost in thought, Serin said

“Look!”

Sungjin stopped and looked towards where Serin had pointed. There was a large pot boiling in the distance.

Sungjin had tunnel visioned on his way to kill the boss and had overlooked the pot. He then asked Serin,

“Please step back a bit.”

“Why? Are you... thinking of tipping it over?”

“Yes.”

“Let me do it. I know you’re strong and all, but tipping over a boiling pot of water with nothing but a sword... Is probably dangerous right?”

She was right. Sungjin stepped off to the side to let her have a clear shot at the pot. The only question was; does her arrow have the penetrating power to pierce through the pot?

But when she pulled back her bow, she spoke:

“Strength of Giants”

For a brief moment, her Pearl Ring illuminated brightly.

‘Ah...’

It was the ring she had received as the raid reward. She must have already checked the stats on the ring and equipped it. It reminded Sungjin of “Kamram – Siamese Twin’s Ring” in his pocket.

‘I didn’t even check what I have... I suppose I could check it along with the ‘Hidden Piece’ reward.’

Sungjin decided to indulge in joys of checking out his equipment a bit later.

‘Ping!’

The arrow she shot flew off towards the pot, making a far more threatening noise than ever before. In one strike, the arrow passed through the pot.

‘Bubble gurgle gurgle gurgle’

Water gushed forth the hole she had punched through the pot. She looked down at her ring and said

“It’s quite useful. Although X2 bonus on Strength only has 3 seconds duration, so I can’t use it more than once...”

He nodded to her comment. Her ‘Rain of Arrows’ was a great AOE skill suitable for multiple enemies, and now she had obtained

a powerful lethal shot she could use for bosses.

The two of them stared at the pot for a while. But there was nothing inside. The Operator remained quiet.

“What’s going on?”

Sungjin was confused for a moment.

‘Did I misunderstand the verses? Or...’

His thoughts were interrupted.

“Kei, isn’t that thing suspicious?”

Serin said, grabbing his attention. Next to the Pot was a large corpse of an Ettin, and a small tent built right up to the cliff wall.

Sungjin walked over to it. The first thing he noticed was the Ettin. He didn’t recall killing it, but the wounds on it suggested it was him who had killed it.

‘...I guess I just ran by while mindlessly killing them.’

Passing by the corpse, he entered the tent. Inside the tent, he didn’t notice anything out of place... Except

‘There’s a wall in the back of the tent? Why?’

Finding it extremely suspicious, he approached the wall. Upon closer inspection, he found a place where the wall was slightly separated from the tent fabric. There was an empty space beyond.

No light passed through from above, and a slight breeze blew out from the gap. Around him filling the tent was a large pile of dissected animals and meat.

‘This is the Giant’s Refrigerator.’

But then

“What... Wait, a Human? Please! Save me!”

He could hear voices from the other side. Sungjin searched between the gap. He saw there, in the dark; A half rat demi-human hanging by his feet upside down.

The Cube cheerfully rang out with an announcement.

[Congratulations! You have discovered]
[Hidden Vendor ‘Wandering Merchant Ruff Han’!]

Chapter 031 – Giant's Canyon (9)

Sungjin gazed up at the Ratman hanging from the ceiling.

‘Another Demi-Human? Are all the Vendors like that...?’

Even ‘Wandering Merchant Aindell’ was a Demihuman. Half human, half Wolf. Sungjin approached the Ratman. The Ratman shouted at him from his tied up position.

“Hey, Human! Help me! If you give me a hand, I’ll make it worth your while!”

Serin entered the cave from behind.

“Wow... I didn’t know there was such a place here.”

The Ratman also yelled at Serin.

“Hey, Human girl! Help me!”

“What’s up with him?”

Before Sungjin had a chance to reply to her question, the Ratman interrupted by shouting

“I said help!”

Sungjin used his fingers to plug up his ears.

“I got it, I got it. Please stop. Stop it.”

He looked over to Serin.

“Serin, please shoot him down. I’ll catch him.”

“Ok.”

She immediately let loose an arrow.

‘Ping~’

The rope which held him was cut with a snap and Sungjin easily caught the falling Ratman.

‘Ugh...’

For one reason or another, the stench on the Ratman was terrible. Sungjin immediately threw the Ratman away.

‘The Giants really planned to eat this thing...?’

The Ratman finally got to his feet and took a breather.

“Haa... I thought I was going to die. You have my thanks, Humans!”

The Ratman smiled at them, exposing his yellow teeth. Sungjin felt no desire to become friendly with him; Skipping all the small talk he asked,

“So, how are you going to make it worth our while?”

The Ratman made a curious smile and replied,

“Ah, that... I can’t do it now. Later on...”

Sungjin raised his eyebrows.

“What?”

The Ratman didn’t catch on to the mood and continued while shaking his head

“I said I will make it worthwhile; I never said it was going to be right...”

‘Woosh’

Sungjin pulled out ‘Moon Specter’ and brought it up to the

Ratman's neck.

“So, you're going to go back on your word, is it?”

Once he saw the naked blade pressed against his neck, his demeanor changed instantly.

“No, I mean... listen... “

Sungjin waited patiently for him to continue. He was the ‘Hidden Vendor’ after all; he must have something special with him.

“My treasure... I had hidden it before I was caught. I have to go find it first.”

Sungjin replied to him frankly.

“Tell me where it is then, and I will go find it myself.”

“The Treasure is hidden beyond the ‘Boundary’. You know that right? You'll die if you leave the boundary for more than 10 seconds! Bada Boom!”

Sungjin considered his words. The Merchant's words had no credibility, but there was no way to disprove him either.

There were sometimes merchants who valued their goods over

their own lives; ones that would never spill a secret no matter the cost.

‘What should I do...?’

Sungjin continued to hold the ‘Moon Specter’ against his head and thought of his options. It was then the Ratman changed his mind.

“Instead... Instead, let me... Let me give you something I do have on me.”

Sungjin used the sword to raise the Ratman’s chin and asked

“What is it exactly?”

If it was something ordinary, he planned to reject it. But he didn’t expect ‘Ruff Han’ to say the following.

“Wandering Merchant’s Mystery Pouch”

“What?”

Sungjin was shocked. It was the same item that gave Sungjin ‘Ancient Stories of the East – Part 1’.

Ratman ‘Ruff Han’ took out a pouch from his vest and handed it

to Sungjin.

“Here, Take it! And let me go! I don’t want to lose another second until I go searching for my stash!”

Sungjin quickly took the pouch and asked the Operator.

“Operator, explanation, quick”

The Operator quickly brought up the information screen at his request.

Mystery Pouch – Wandering Merchant’s secret stash

Heroic Treasure

Unique Skill – Roulette (IV)

Roulette (IV) – receive one ‘Legendary’ class crafting material.
Pouch Disappears after use.

It’s definitely the same item as before.

‘This...is totally acceptable.’

Sungjin returned the ‘Moon Specter’ to its sheath. Now free from the threat of violence, the Ratman reached into his pocket and took out another pouch and tossed it over to Serin as well.

“Thank you very much as well, pretty lady!”

He threw her a wink. Sungjin couldn’t see her face, but he couldn’t imagine her looking very happy.

“I have settled my debt with this, Humans!”

The Ratman fell on all fours and dashed away towards an exit on the other side of the cave; an exit too small for a human being to fit through.

“And I’m not a liar! I’ll see you again in a future Raid! If you’re able, that is!”

‘If you’re able...’ probably meant ‘you’ll most likely die and so we might not see each other’... It wasn’t exactly a positive farewell.

Once the Hidden Merchant Ruff Han left, Sungjin took a look at the pouch.

‘If ‘Ancient Stories of the East’ Part 2 or 3 comes out of here...’

“Roulette...”

Serin was staring at the screen for the pouch as well. It was most likely her first time seeing this type of item.

“This is an extremely good item; It gives a Legendary Crafting material.”

“Ooh...”

“Well, there’s no point hoarding it for later... so I’ll go first.”

“Please go ahead.”

Sungjin breathed in deeply to prepare himself and then shouted

“Roulette!”

The ribbon tying up the pouch released automatically and the content revealed itself; Although he had no creed, he still prayed.

‘Please!’

The appearance of the treasure was

‘A Book!’

Sungjin quickly picked it up to check the screen. Now as long as it was not Part 1, he was golden. However

Ancient Stories of the Middle East – Part 2

Legendary Crafting Material

Omnibus of ancient stories of the Middle East.

Once parts 1, 2 and 3 are gathered, it can be made into a complete volume.

‘Middle East?!’

It was an entirely wrong line of books. With the component cost of 5000 coins per book, an item you could only equip one at a time, there was no reason or need to craft multiple books of this kind.

‘...Damn...’

Sungjin massaged his forehead wallowing in regret. But then,

“Roulette.”

Serin also used her Roulette. Once the pouch unveiled itself, the item that appeared was

‘Another book!’

Serin lifted up her item.

“Operator... What is this item?”

The Operator opened up an information screen for her. And on it displayed the item Sungjin had been wanting; ‘Ancient Stories of the East – Part 2’. Sungjin forgot himself and immediately grabbed her arm.

“Wah!”

Serin jumped up slightly in surprise; She had never seen Kei react to anything before like that.

“Why? Is it a good thing?”

Sungjin held onto her hands and said

“Miss Serin, Please, let’s trade these two books.”

“Excuse me?”

Serin’s cheeks turned slightly rosy.

‘Oh, right...’

Noticing the change in her behavior, Sungjin continued after letting go of her hands.

“This book is one of the materials required to complete a single item; An ancient Omnibus. This Omnibus grants enormous power.”

Serin understood quickly.

“Yes, and?”

“And so... I already have ‘Ancient Stories of the East – Part 1’. So... I need the Part 2 of the same series.”

Serin nodded.

“...Okay then. I’ll just give you this, as thanks for protecting me this Raid.”

“Ah, wait, that’s...”

Sungjin hesitated. But within moments, he made up his mind; Only one person could own a single book at a time.

Of course, if he accepted the book now and sold it on the Black market later, he could get 500 Coins, but it was far too inefficient to do so.

Trade was the right course of action. Especially if she had the potential to become one of the Final Five ‘last companions to the end’. So Sungjin told her

“No. We should trade these; My ‘Ancient Stories of the Middle East – Part 2’ to your ‘Ancient Stories of the East – Part 2’. I suggest that you collect all three parts to the ‘Ancient Stories of the Middle East’ and craft the complete book. If you manage to do so, it should be enough to keep you alive for at least several chapters.”

The Operator gave an announcement.

[Returning to the Black Market in 10 Minutes]

Time was running out. Serin nodded.

“I understand Kei.”

Sungjin and Serin put their Cubes together to trade. Once it was done, Sungjin had finally obtained Part 2 of the book he wanted.

‘Now all I have to do is buy the final part from the bookstore.’

While Sungjin was thinking so, Serin took a look at her new item.

“Ancient stores...”

Sungjin decided to ask

“Miss Serin, how many Black Coins do you have right now?”

“Black Coins? Including what I just got from this raid, around 5000.”

She didn't spend too much; With the exception of her bow, she probably didn't spend her coins elsewhere. Sungjin told her

“When you go back to the Black Market this time, please go to ‘Gourmet’s Bookstore’. Ask about the book... and if you are able, make the complete item.”

Serin nodded. Sungjin continued,

“And... I don't know the name, but please visit the mask shop run by a Raccoon Merchant. Okay?”

“Okay.”

Once Sungjin was done, he placed the book ‘materials’ into the Cube. Not too long after, the Operator announced

[You will return to the Black Market in 1 minute.]

Serin, who kept quiet until now asked Sungjin

“Kei... Will we be able to see each other again?”

Sungjin answered

“Raids are designed in such a way that survivors will meet each other again. And as you can tell, I am very strong. I will survive until the very end. So... If you can keep yourself safe and survive chapter to chapter, we will eventually be able to see each other again. I promise.”

At his words, Serin nodded bravely.

“Um... Before we go our separate ways... Can you please tell me your real name?”

Sungjin hesitated.

[You will return to the Black Market in 10 seconds. 10]

Once the Operator’s countdown began, Sungjin told her

“If we meet each other again, I promise I will tell you my real name.”

[9, 8, 7]

Serin nodded helplessly.

“...Ok, it’s a promise.”

[6, 5, 4]

Sungjin couldn’t help but tell her one more time out of his concern for her.

“Mask shop, bookstore. You got it, right?”

Serin nodded. She was intelligent. She would not forget.

[3, 2, 1]

In the last moments, she bid him goodbye.

“Let’s meet again, Kei.”

Sungjin wanted to reply to her. But

[o]

The countdown finished, and the hunters were teleported away from the Canyon.

Chapter 032 – Black Market Fourth Shopping

Even as he was teleported to the Black Market, Sungjin had tried to say words of farewell. But he missed the chance.

‘We will probably never see each other again...’

But that was also too heartbreaking to say. It was a mistake allowing himself to let her under his skin; While cooperating and working together, he had ever so slightly opened his heart to her.

Sungjin looked around. He located the teashop ‘First Drop’ and walked over to inspect his reward.

Once Sungjin sat in the same seat as last time, the Panda man welcomed him.

“What should I get you today?”

“Iced tea... and something to snack on.”

“Understood, coming right up.”

Once the shopkeeper left, Sungjin took out the ‘Kamram – Siamese Twin’s Ring’ for inspection. One ring with two gems; it was a strange looking ring.

‘Just what does it do...?’

Without having to ask, the Operator opened up the detailed screen for him.

Kamram – Siamese Twin’s Ring

Legendary Ring

Passive Skill

Dual Weapon Mastery (V)

Copies 100% of the proficiency of the dominant hand over to the other hand.

One will, two talents

The pinnacle of Martial Prowess

Sungjin was stunned. While he was reeling from shock, Xiu Ran set down iced tea and rice cake in front of him.

After a while, Sungjin grasped the cold tea cup. Once he downed the entire content of chilled tea, he had recovered enough to process what he had just received.

‘Does this mean...?’

Sungjin decided to test out the effects of ‘Kamram’ immediately.

“Equip”

The ring readjusted its size and settled itself over Sungjin’s right ring finger. It was a strange sensation; Sungjin felt slightly disoriented for a moment, but also somehow more sensitive than before.

His eyes refocused, and his hands trembled. He wanted to test it out right away. But, now that he thought of it, he didn’t have a second Katana.

‘I shouldn’t have sold the Basic Katana...’

If he had kept it, it would have been a perfect for practice. But he already sold it for mere ten coins.

‘What should I do?’

Then, he remembered he actually had another weapon. The ‘Manta – Cho’Roch’s Staff’

Sungjin took one rice cake and chewed on it as he put his hand on top of the cube.

“Operator, give me the Manta.”

The lid on the cube opened up, and an extremely long metallic staff emerged from within.

It was a staff in name only; it looked more like a rebar. Sungjin inspected the rod-like staff.

Manta – Cho’Roch’s Staff

Heroic Staff – Strength B Dexterity D Magic Power C

Passive Skill

Red Magician (II)

Improves the effects of offensive magic by 20%

Magic Swordsman (I)

Each magic cast improves weapon damage by 10%

Each attack by weapon improves magic damage by 10%

Max 3 stacks

Staff of the Powerful Mage, Cho'Roch.

Became a mage due to losing the bet on a coin flip against his younger brother.

It was better than expected. The bonus weapon damage and the 20% increase in spell effect was already good, but the 'Magic Swordsman' passive was really great.

Even more so as Sungjin had already decided to try the Magic Swordsman route. Taking the staff in hand, Sungjin briefly left the shop. And using the left hand, he tried swinging the staff around.

He was able to wield it perfectly well. Then, taking out the 'Moon Specter', he tried to swing the sword around. It felt as natural as if he was using his right hand.

'...Have I become ambidextrous now?'

While he was thinking so,

“Whoa, Whoa Mr Hunter”

Sungjin heard someone speak to him from behind. When he turned around to see, it was a half dog demihuman. The demihuman approached him and said

“Please do not wave your weapon around in public.”

The clothes the demihuman wore was reminiscent of a police outfit. The security in this place was rather tight. Sungjin nodded and replied

“Ah, I was just experimenting, testing things out. I wasn’t trying to harm anyone.”

“Ok, understood.”

Sungjin returned to the shop and took his seat. From the earlier test, he was certain;

‘I can wield ‘Moon Specter’ and ‘Blood Vengeance’ at the same time.’

Upon thinking that, Sungjin couldn’t help but get hyped. But there was still a roadblock to this.

“Operator, how many coins do I have?”

[You have 10180 Black Coins]

‘Stories of the East – Part 3’ would take 5000 Coins, and Blood Vengeance was 9700 Coins; with the current amount of coins, he would have to pick one or the other.

‘By the time the next raid is over...’

Sungjin resumed to the same dilemma he was in during his last visit to the Black Market.

‘Do I complete the book, or buy the Blood Vengeance?’

But unlike last time, it only took 3 seconds to make a decision.

‘I’ll make the book. With it, I won’t have to exert myself much during combat.’

Buying Blood Vengeance after practicing with Manta was probably a good idea anyway. Kenneth’s ‘Last Edge’ wasn’t going anywhere. He could get the sword at any time.

Once Sungjin was done gathering his thoughts, he finished off

the rest of the tea and the rice cakes and stood up. He immediately headed out to Gourmet's bookstore.

“Ho, young Master Hunter, so did you prepare the coins?”

Sungjin confidently nodded.

“5 thousand black coins. Please give me the last volume of ‘Stories of the East’.”

Gourmet looked up at Sungjin and asked

“Hmm? What about Part 2?”

“I obtained the 2nd part. In the raid.”

Gourmet formed an ‘o’ with his mouth in surprise.

“Ohh, what a lucky young man!”

“Things worked out somehow.”

“Ok, just a moment then”

Gourmet turned around. Sungjin thought Gourmet would enter a mountain full of books again, but Gourmet soon turned around to present him the book; It seemed that he had prepared it for

Sungjin's return.

“Operator, after payment, please take out ‘Stories from the East’ Part 1 and 2 from the inventory.”

[Understood.]

As requested, the Cube completed the transaction and gave him the other two parts of the book.

Sungjin held the three parts of the book in order with both his hands and raised them above his head.

“Combine!”

With his shout, the three components floated into the air, and let out bright illuminations.

“Ooh!”

The goat Merchant Gourmet watched the light show from over his spectacles.

*

“Hey, another Donut please.”

“Understood.”

The black police officer Baltren was sitting in the Donut shop, inspecting the club he had received from the previous raid.

Manmu – Pach’s Club

Heroic blunt – Strength S Dexterity C

Passive Skill

Stun (II)

Each strike against the same enemy increases the chance to stun it by 20%.

Max 3 Stacks.

Powerful Warrior Pach's club.

Winning a coin flip against his older brother, Pach decided to become a warrior.

‘Hmmm...’

He was in a dilemma. There was a weakness in this club compared to the club he had received in chapter 1, the ‘Skull Romabel’.

‘Skull Romabel is great for defense... and this one is ideal for offense. What should I do? Should I carry both and switch them according to the situation...?’

But he was interrupted by a strange noise coming from the Cube.

[Attention Please]

It was the first time he had heard this from the cube. Baltren put down his club to look at the cube.

*

“Haa...”

Hiro looked up at the sky still holding his Katana.

“Where could he have been? That Hidden boss...”

He was lucky last round, all four of his teammates were excellent. Using great teamwork, they were able to successfully hunt ‘Pach and Cho’Roch’ safely without losing anyone. They even had 15 minutes left.

“It was perfect... Just where was he?”

They had combed the entire Canyon but had failed to find the boss. Hiro briefly recalled his sensei.

“Sensei... He managed it last time, so he probably did it this time too...right?”

“Ramen’s ready!”

Meanwhile, his ramen was done. Hiro first picked up the bowl

and drank the soup.

“Mmmmm~”

It was hot and well seasoned. It was great that he was able to find this Ramen shop in the market. Hiro took a long strand of Ramen and took his first bite.

But, the Cube let out a sound he had never heard before.

[Attention please]

“Hmm?”

Hiro cut the noodle short and stared at the Cube.

*

“Aww, why? Why does a pretty girl like you want to hide your face behind a mask?”

Serin smiled slightly and answered.

“Well... I think I'll need it... for the raid...”

“Ahh well. Yeah, I know too... ‘Consequence of exceptional beauty’...! What a horrible thing! But...! Since our life is so short anyway, isn’t it better to live our short lives looking beautiful? Don’t you think so?”

The Racoon Mask Merchant was an overly talkative old lady. Serin replied

“So... anything you’d recommend? How much of my appearance can you change?”

“Appearance? All of it. Age, gender, race...”

It can even change gender. How convenient.

“Ah... ok.”

“The only thing you can’t alter is things which affect combat. For example, longer arms... The mask shop is forbidden from selling things related to combat.”

“So, is there anything you’d recommend?”

“Try this on.”

The Racoon merchant handed Serin a mask. She was about to put the mask on when she was interrupted by the Cube.

[Attention Please]

“You’ll see if you put it on, how...”

Serin stopped the merchant.

“Wait, please.”

The merchant immediately shut her mouth. The Cube continued with the announcement.

[‘Master Hunter’ has succeeded in completing the legendary ancient omnibus ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’]

[All other copies will be destroyed, and the owners will be refunded by 500 coins.]

*

Hunters, all in their own instance of the Market, heard the announcement. Most did not know of this ‘Master Hunter’, but a few were able to guess who it referred to. Baltren thought to himself,

‘That teenager...’

Hiro shouted towards the sky.

“Wow! Sensei did it!”

Serin, still holding the mask, thought of the man she was with until moments ago.

“Master Hunter... Kei”

Volume 02

Chapter 033 – Black Market Fourth Shopping (2)

Sungjin raised his hands towards the sky. The book basked the room in blinding light and gently settled on top of his hands as it dimmed. The Goat Merchant Gourmet let out a tsk with his tongue and commented

“Chapter 4 just finished... and you have already completed the ancient omnibus... What on Earth...”

Sungjin read the front cover. Without a doubt, it was ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’. He turned to Gourmet and thanked him from the bottom of his heart.

“Thank you for the trade. I will head out now.”

“Ok, See you around. If you ever need to see me again that is.”

Sungjin thanked him once more and then left the shop. As he strolled through the market, he flipped through the pages of ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’. Last time, this book was in another hunter’s possession.

‘Ancient Omnibus’ was a unique item which only one hunter could own at a time, so he could only watch as others used them in his previous life.

Romance of the Three Kingdoms – Ancient stories of the East

Ancient Legendary book

Active Skill

Declamation (V)

Read the Novel. Reading different parts of the Novel causes different effects.

1 use per day.

A tale among tales, a classic among classics; An Omnibus which systematically deconstructs the ups and downs of human and national relationships for the reader.

‘I can’t believe I’m reading this now...’

It was a whole new level of satisfaction. The effects were considerably advantageous even in the later chapters, but obtaining it since the very beginning was nothing short of over-powered.

‘I’ll have to test it as soon as possible.’

Sungjin carefully placed the book into his vest and left for ‘Ninety Nine Nights’ where Dalupin and Cain were waiting.

*

Once he returned to the ‘Ninety Nine Nights’,

“Woof Woof!”

Cain greeted him first as usual. Sungjin checked his neck. There was not a single mark on him; his injuries were healed, and not a single scratch remained.

Any wounds and injuries sustained during the raids were reverted once the raid was over with the Hunters being returned to the Black Market. Sungjin brought his face close to Cain’s ears and whispered

“You worked hard Cain. Thank you.”

“Wooo~”

Cain affirmed with a cry.

“Okay, okay,”

Sungjin briefly bent down and hugged Cain by his neck. However, he felt that something was odd.

His arms felt a little short. Sungjin stopped for a moment and stared at Cain.

‘Did he... get fat? Taller?’

“Cain, did you get bigger?”

“Woo...”

Cain let out a short sound. Sungjin could not discern the intention.

“Well... ok. Anyways, good work, let's go eat.”

“Woof!”

This was easily understood. Once inside, Dalupin greeted Sungjin as usual.

“Welcome back, esteemed Hunter.”

“Prepare a meal for us please.”

“What would you like to order?”

“Hmm...”

Sungjin thought for a moment. The first item that came to his mind was

“Pizza.”

“Traditional Italian style? Or American Franchise style?”

“Eh... Korean Franchise style? Modified American style? Either way, with tons of cheese.”

“Understood. Any requests for toppings?”

“Bacon, Pepperoni, Black Olives, Bell Pepper, and Garlic, please. Also, lamb meat for Cain.”

“Understood. Please wait for a moment, I will go prepare your food.”

Dalupin bowed deeply and returned to the kitchen. While Dalupin was gone, Sungjin recalled the Spellbook he had obtained in the last Raid and decided to take it out.

‘I should Memorize it quickly before the Pizza is done.’

“Operator, give me the Spellbook please.”

The cube wordlessly obeyed, spitting out the Spellbook. Sungjin opened the crimson Spellbook.

Spellbook – Fireball

Class 4 Offensive Magic

Launch a large fireball. The fireball explodes on contact and the flames spread out dealing collateral damage in the vicinity of the blast.

This was a standard fire type magic. Most mages will have used this spell at one point or another. Sungjin did not hesitate.

“Memorize.”

The red cover of the Spellbook lit up, illuminating the Inn.

[Magic – Fireball was memorized.]

[Incantation for the spell is ‘Incinerate everything in your path! Fireball!’.]

Once he was done memorizing the spell, Dalupin returned with the Pizza. Of course, along with a sizable Lamb meat.

“Eat lots, Cain.”

Sungjin patted Cain in the head before taking the first slice to eat. The cheese stretched into long strands as he took the slice.

Sungjin cut the cheese with his fingers before stuffing the slice into his mouth.

“Mmmm”

The thick flavor of the cheese cooked on top of soft bread, with pepperoni and bacon mixed in; it was an overwhelming and succulent first bite. Perfectly cooked bell pepper and garlic also gave a refreshing aftertaste, as well as controlling the greasiness. The pizza highlighted the skill of a master.

Sungjin stared at Dalupin.

“Anything you need?”

Dalupin tilted his head at Sungjin’s stare. As if proving his half-owl status, his head tilted more than 60 degrees. Sungjin wordlessly gave him thumbs up.

On understanding what he wanted to convey, Dalupin lowered his head and answered.

“Ah, thank you.”

Title: Master Hunter

HP: 17100 MP: 3990

Strength: 2486 1912 (+574)

Dexterity: 2721 2093 (+628)

Endurance: 1710 1315 (+395)

Magic Power: 395 304 (+91)

Mind Power: 399 307 (+92)

Unallocated Points: 3820

“Hmm...”

Sitting in the warm bath, Sungjin furrowed his brows as he pondered over his stats.

‘I should continue to invest into strength, dexterity and endurance...right?’

Even if Sungjin was going to experiment with becoming a magic swordsman, the basis of his power was still that of a swordsman; Even though he began investing into Magic Power and Mind Power, he couldn’t afford to forget this important fact.

‘Continue to maintain overwhelming physical superiority, and raise Magic Power enough to be helpful.’

Sungjin reserved 1000 points for Strength, Dexterity and Endurance.

‘And then 820 points remain...’

He didn't get much of an opportunity to utilize his magic in the previous raid..

‘Ah... I had even filled up my mana right before the fight with ‘Pach and Cho’Roch’, and totally forgot to try using spells on them.’

He was still not acquainted with using Magic. When in danger, he fell back to swordsmanship. Anyone would have probably acted the same.

It was human nature to fall back to familiar things unless there was a certain margin of safety and time to explore new things. On top of that, his spells were too weak compared to his swordplay.

‘If I’m not going to be using it often... I’ll try making Magic Power stronger to make it worth the while.’

Sungjin concluded his thoughts. ‘Even considering the class 4 magic Fire Ball, there shouldn’t be a pressing need to increase the mana pool too much.’

Thus Sungjin planned out his stat points as follows

‘With 3 to 1 ratio for Magic to Mind Power, raising 615 points to 205 points respectively should do it...’

Sungjin tried to calculate the points out.

‘304 plus 615 is 919, taking into consideration Master Hunter’s effects...’

Annoyed already at the calculations, Sungjin called for the Operator’s help.

“Operator, what would be the total points if I were to increase Magic Power by 615?”

[1195]

“And if I raise Mind Power by 205?”

[666]

The MP would become 6660. Using 4th class magic with 1195 Magic Power would allow him to fire the spell at least once.

‘If I ever need mana, I could always use ‘Lich’s Finger’, and ‘Moon Specter’s’ passive to recover them...’

Sungjin decided to try to min/max the magic; he wanted to see

what it was like.

“Operator, raise Strength by 1000, Dexterity by 1000, and Endurance by 1000. Add 615 to Magic Power and 205 to Mind Power”

[Applied.]

Once the distribution was complete, Sungjin dipped himself deeper into the tub. Chapter 4 was eventful.

Trying magic for the first time, meeting Serin Han, fighting a building-sized Cyclops, killing two PK Trolls, running into the Wandering Merchant Ruff Han. And completing an Ancient Omnibus.

So many things in just a few hours.

“Sigh...”

Sungjin closed his eyes and let the thoughts wash over him as he pondered over them.

‘At this point... I’ve pretty much cleared every Raid perfectly....’

Sungjin tried to think back to his previous life.

['Spell Master' has succeeded in completing the legendary ancient omnibus 'Romance of the Three Kingdoms']

'Let's see... what chapter was that again?'

Even a vague and generous estimate puts it at about seven or eight chapters from now. Sungjin was able to complete 'Romance of the Three Kingdoms' in four chapters, so he felt that he was off to a great start.

Compared to blindly trying to complete the raids like last time, he was already several times stronger. Now, Sungjin was confident that he would have no trouble with the raids for a long while.

Of course with the exception of excruciating circumstances. That reminded Sungjin of the past.

'Why did you do that?!'

Excruciating Circumstances. Sungjin couldn't help but mutter a name that resurfaced from the past.

"Spell Master Ed..."

He still had no clear answer for what had happened back then,

but it was all in the past.

‘No need to complicate myself.’

Sungjin got up from the bath.

‘Even if trolls get in my way, even if there is not one dependable ally, even if I have to go on alone, I will see it to the end.’

In the middle of the living room was ‘Moon Specter’ and ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’ resting on top of a table. With these two items, Sungjin was more than ready to handle everything and anything for at least some time.

Once he completes the next raid and gets his hands on the ‘Blood Vengeance’... Sungjin wiped down the moisture and dressed himself.

‘Knock Knock’

Sungjin heard knocks on the door. There was only one possible person who could knock on the door this late at night.

“Please come in.”

As expected, it was Dalupin.

“Dear Hunter, here is the information page for the next raid.”

Sungjin accepted the sheet. Dalupin bowed and

“Then I bid you goodnight.”

He excused himself and left the room. Once Dalupin closed the door. Sungjin checked the top of the information sheet and only read the title.

‘Information concerning Kutan Desert’

Still the same order. Sungjin discarded the paper and threw himself on the bed. It was a long day. Soon after closing his eyes, he was fast asleep.

Chapter 034 – Kutan Desert (1)

[One hour left before the Raid commences]

Sungjin woke up to the Operator's voice.

‘Mmm?’

When he came to, he was laying on top of the bed in ‘Ninety Nine Nights’. Sungjin normally set an alarm two hours before raid start, but tonight he had allowed himself to sleep in. Sungjin thought for a moment.

‘Did I remember to distribute points?’

Yes, he recalled the bath last night. Sungjin closed his eyes again. Everything urgent had already been taken care of. It would not take him longer than 50 minutes to get ready.

“Operator, remind me in 10 minutes.”

[Understood.]

But, 5 minutes later,

‘Knock Knock’

Dalupin came knocking.

“Sir?”

Sungjin had no choice but to get up.

“Yes?”

He answered as he opened the door. Outside, Dalupin stood waiting, holding items in each hand. One was a waterskin, and the other was a long piece of cloth.

‘Oh yeah...’

“You usually get up earlier... but since you were taking your time this morning, I decided to deliver this to you myself. These are supplies provided to all hunters. As you have already found out, the Raid will be taking place in the Desert, so...”

Sungjin nodded. Dalupin first handed over the water.

“This waterskin contains cold water. It is constantly refilled by magical means, so feel free to use it as much as you like.”

Sungjin accepted the waterskin.

“Thank you.”

“And this long cloth...”

“I know. I’ll eat first, and I’ll make sure to take it with me before the raid begins, so please wait for now.”

“Understood. I have prepared a variety of clothes which...”

“I know. Later.”

Dalupin bowed deeply and excused himself.

“Understood.”

He closed the door and left. Sungjin went to take a quick shower and checked the closet.

The closet was mostly full of large muslin cloth that Arabians are often seen wearing. For the second time ever, Sungjin wore the muslin clothes. It did not suit him, but he had no other choice.

[10 minutes have elapsed.]

The alarm from earlier went off.

“I got it, I got it.”

Sungjin tapped the top of the cube and climbed down the stairs to the first floor.

“Woof!”

After greeting Cain, Sungjin ordered Cain’s food first.

“Please give Cain the best cut of beef. In the future, please provide him three meals a day, something Cain would like, and in enough quantities.”

“As you wish.”

“And for me...”

Sungjin paused for a moment to consider his options for breakfast and said the first thing that came to mind.

“Korean meal, with Doenjang Jjigae as the soup.”

Once he was done ordering, it occurred to him that this was a topic recently.

‘Where was it again...?’

It didn’t take long until he recalled who it was.

‘Between Kimchi Jjigae and Doenjang Jjigae, which is your favourite?’

Sungjin couldn’t help but grin. Dalupin soon brought over the bubbling hot soup, and few side dishes to go along with the rice.

While Sungjin was enjoying some fruit punch after the meal, the Operator gave out an announcement.

[Raid will commence in 10 minutes.]

He had just finished eating moments ago.

‘I guess I’ll have to digest food while hunting.’

Turning to his host, Sungjin requested:

“Hey, Dalupin, please do that now.”

“Ah, yes.”

Sungjin stood up straight in his chair. Dalupin brought out the long cloth from before and wrapped it around Sungjin's head into a turban.

Sungjin turned his head left and right. It was his second time, but he was still not used to it. But he tolerated it since it was essential this time.

Sungjin picked up the waterskin he received in the morning and opened it up. He took a quick swig from the waterskin.

“Mmm...”

It was almost cold enough to cause brain freeze. But it is perfect since the water is meant to be used in the desert.

Once he was ready, Sungjin stood outside the doors of the Ninety Nine Nights and stretched. Soon after, he was teleported into the Raid.

*

The intense rays of sunlight blinded the eyes and burned the skin. The hot tan sand formed heatwaves, causing things in the distance to shimmer. Following the contour of the landscape, dry winds blew, scattering sand and altering the dunes.

The place Sungjin was teleported to was a scorching desert. The Operator began her explanation.

[Welcome to the Kutan Desert.]

[It is a barren land of death where few survive]

[Please be warned; the few that are able to endure the blistering heat and deadly winds]

[are extremely tough and violent.]

Sungjin frowned and looked up at the sky. The sun was too hot; he didn't want to stay here for long.

[Synchronizing Hunters.]

Sungjin stood slightly tilted and watched his teammates appear one by one. 'High Level Guardian', 'Zealot', 'Gladiator', 'High Level Scout'. Most of the titles were excellent this round.

After four rounds, most of the weak and mediocre hunters have been filtered out, and now only the strong remained. This time, Sungjin looked at his teammates with attention. The 'High Level Guardian' was an Asian wielding an enormous shield and mace.

Despite being an Asian man, the Guardian was bulky in size, like a sumo wrestler.

‘He doesn’t look like a Korean man... is he Chinese?’

Even though just last raid there was Xian Wang, if you consider the enormous population of China, it wouldn’t be strange to have at least one Chinese hunter in every round.

The ‘Zealot’ was a tall black man. Not only was he tall, but his muscles were also considerably large. He held an axe in each arm, each emitting a crimson light. His appearance was very fearsome.

‘Dual Axe Zealot... how apt.’

The ‘Gladiator’ was a sharp-nosed white man; one could almost cut paper on his nose. Although his body size looked relatively normal, the tight muscular structure of the man was visible even through his clothes; he must have lifted weights regularly.

He carried a sword somewhere between the length of a Short Sword and a Long Sword. On his left arm was a round shield that covered his entire arm, giving him the appearance akin to a Roman Gladiator.

‘This man is strong.’

Sungjin examined the man carefully. Behind him was the experience of overcoming countless raids.

Just looking at him and reading his demeanor, he could sense that the man was extraordinarily powerful.

Last was the 'High Level Scout'. He was a long bearded Arabian. He was tall and thin, and his weapon was an expensive looking crossbow.

'Serin was like that too... Ranged hunters sure invest a lot into expensive weapons.'

There was a variety of races, but everyone was wearing a turban on their head (only the Arabian man looked decent). And each individual looked strong.

All four men probably had their strengths and weaknesses, but all four men had probably taken a majority share of the contribution points in each of their raids.

Everyone carefully glanced at each other. By now, they all probably understood that getting a good grasp of the nature and strength of their teammates would help them survive.

At some point, Sungjin realized that all four men were staring at the title floating above Sungjin's head.

'Master Hunter has succeeded in completing the legendary ancient omnibus Romance of the Three Kingdoms'

It was probably due to this message. Everyone had been given

this announcement while shopping and resting in the Black Market.

‘Who is Master Hunter?’

And then during the next raid, they find a ‘Master Hunter’ in their team, so the logical progression of their thoughts was ‘is it him?’. Sungjin pretended not to notice the stares.

Titles were not unique to a person, so just because he held the title did not guarantee that he was the same person as the one mentioned in the announcement. Although, getting Master Hunter title was nearly impossible.

The awkward silence continued for a good long while, but eventually it was broken.

“Ok, I think that went on long enough. Let’s introduce ourselves.”

It was the Black ‘Zealot’. He began with his self-introduction.

“I am Ralph, an American. I look forward to working with you gentlemen.”

And one by one the hunters introduced themselves. The Asian ‘High Level Guardian’ answered

“I am Bukitai, Mongolian.”

Sungjin nodded.

‘Ah, so he was a Mongol... I thought he was too large compared to other Asian men.’

Next was the Sharp-nosed White ‘Gladiator’

“Igor Janović, Russia”

The cold voice fit his image well. Last was the Arabian ‘High Level Scout.’

“Munir Yusef. Please call me Munir. I am Algerian.”

Last was Sungjin’s turn.

“K... Chinese.”

He half-heartedly answered. He didn’t want to reveal his nationality, but he didn’t want anyone to complain again that he had not revealed his country of origin.

When he declared himself Chinese, the other men accepted it without any question.

The only person here who could potentially tell apart Asian men by nationality was probably the Mongol, but he didn't seem interested in prying.

Instead, he was busy drinking water from Dalupin's Waterskin. His massive frame was already drenched in sweat.

The 'Zealot' banged his axe together as if he was clapping and announced,

"Let's cooperate and overcome this raid together."

Munir agreed.

"Yes, let's do that."

Even the Gladiator nodded. The only ones that did not respond were the two Asian men.

The Mongol was too busy spraying his entire body with cold water, and Sungjin was daydreaming about when would be the best time to utilize the power of 'Romance of the Three Kingdoms'.

'Should I try it on boss? Or should I wait until the Hidden boss, since they are usually stronger?'

Sungjin looked far off into the distance at the endless desert. This Chapter was not ideal for him. Limited the area may be, the

content was a featureless desert for as far as the eyes could see.

Although it was fundamentally different from ‘Greysoul Cemetery’, it felt the same; he couldn’t tell where was what. Sungjin thought to himself.

‘The Raid boss is one thing... How do I find the Hidden boss in the middle of this desert?’

Kutan Desert Raid

Objective – Hunt the King of Lizards ‘Basilisk’

Time Limit: 2 hours

The Operator’s mission briefing popped up. The time limit was much longer than most previous raids at 2 hours, but that actually signified that this raid was going to be very tough on the hunters.

Sungjin looked up at the sky once more. Just standing for 2 hours in this sun would be enough to cause blackouts.

He was already dripping with sweat, and only a few minutes had passed. Sungjin uncorked the Waterskin Dalupin had handed him and drank a few gulps of water.

Monsters were one thing, but resisting the scorching heat was extremely fatiguing.

The American Ralph and even the Russian Igor were drenched in sweat, looking exhausted even before the raid began; Mongol Bukitai’s state goes without saying wasn’t any better. Only the Algerian Munir looked fine.

Uninterested in the Hunter’s circumstances, the Operator began the countdown in an apathetic voice.

[Raid will begin in 10 seconds. 10, 9, 8]

Sungjin licked his lower lip and put his hands over ‘Moon Specter’. And he thought to himself

‘Hidden boss or whatever, I’m going to end this Raid quickly.’

Chapter 035 – Kutan Desert (2)

[3, 2, 1, 0 Raid commencing]

Along with the signal, the hunters began moving into the desert cautiously. Sungjin decided to stick with them for the time being. Although, he had no intentions to participate in hunting as a group with the rest.

The difference in ability was absolute. It made more sense to hunt alone and clear the raid quickly before beginning the search for Hidden Pieces.

It was just that, he was curious about the skill level of his teammates. Especially the ‘Gladiator’ Igor.

‘I’ll just watch for few minutes before heading off to kill the boss.’

As one would expect, the ‘High Level Guardian’ Bukitai took the vanguard position. Next was the ‘Gladiator’ Igor, followed by ‘Zealot’ Ralph and ‘Master Hunter’ Sungjin.

‘High Level Scout’ Munir stood at the back with his crossbow. The formation of the hunters was predetermined by the characteristics of the weapons they wielded.

Sungjin strolled along, moving together with the other Hunters, when a Giant Scorpion emerged from the far side of the sand dunes.

It was about 5 meters in length, sporting two gigantic claws and the iconic poisonous stinger poised two meters above its body.

“Ssh ssh sssh”

Three or four bolts were fired in quick succession from Munir’s crossbow. The Giant Scorpion, however, sensed that something was flying its way and raised its claws in defense.

Munir’s bolts could not penetrate the claw’s thick plating and bounced off harmlessly.

The Scorpion moved its many legs and slid down the dunes, rapidly charging towards the Hunters at an alarming rate. Bukitai at the vanguard nervously readied his shield.

However, before the Scorpion reached the hunters, Munir put down his crossbow and raised one hand.

“Binding frost! Frostbite!”

‘Mmm?’

Sungjin stared at him. To be fair, it wasn’t too unusual.

‘Frostbite’ was a 2nd circle Magic obtainable from the Lich. With a little investment of stats, the magic was possible to cast.

The problem was its effectiveness; his stats were probably geared towards the use of his crossbow, meaning the spell effect would probably be weak. Lo and behold, the affected area of the spell was smaller than Sungjin’s own attempt from back in the fourth chapter.

His spell only managed to slightly slow down the speed of the monster. But it was still better than nothing.

“Yaa!”

Thanks to his spell, Bukitai was able to get the courage to pick up his shield and charge ahead. The Giant Scorpion wildly flailed its claws.

Bukitai used his giant shield skillfully to block the blows from the claws. Meanwhile,

“Tail!”

Munir yelled from the back. While Bukitai was distracted with the claws, the Scorpion had poised its tail for a strike.

Too late. Bukitai saw the tail and attempted to raise his shield to protect himself. But before he managed to,

“Bang!”

‘Gladiator Igor blocked the tail with his shield. Not only that, he moved at incredible speed to swing his sword and severed the tail.

Sungjin puckered his lips and nodded.

“Ooh...”

With that much speed attack power, never mind his equipment, he had considerably high stats; he must have maintained an overwhelming contribution level until now.

With the tail already gone, the claws were cut off by the combined attack of both Bukitai and the ‘Zealot’ Ralph.

“Sh sh ssh”

Munir’s triple crossbow shot landed on some of the more thinly armoured parts of the Scorpion’s body. The four hunters managed to kill their first enemy without much problem.

Munir puckered his lips and whistled. Ralph turned around to the other three men.

“I think we’ll be okay like this.”

Something was wrong. There was only 'three others', one was missing.

“Eh?”

“Where’s the Chinese guy?”

Igor looked around searching for him. Only Bukitai, who grew up in the wide open plains, was able to get a glimpse of Sungjin in the distance; But only for a moment.

Sungjin disappeared from sight utilizing ‘Swift Paw’.

Bukitai squinted his already narrow eye to see, but Sungjin’s form was lost between the shaky waves of heat.

*

Sungjin paused for a moment after covering a large distance to pour water over his head with his magic waterskin.

“So hot!”

He didn’t run with an objective in mind. Like Ahenna, the Basilisk will appear by itself once enough enemies are slain.

Sungjin just did not wish to share contribution points with others.

‘All four of them looked strong, so they shouldn’t face anything that can kill them.’

Sungjin began hunting solo in the desert. He saw a large Desert Lizard in the distance. Just the body was already 4 meters long, and with the tail, the Lizard was about 6 meters in length (6.5 yards, 19.6 ft).

It lay as still as a corpse in the distance. This was a characteristic of the Lizard; It was silent and still, but once it decided to move, it moved with amazing nimbleness.

Sungjin took out ‘Moon Specter’ and approached the Lizard. The Lizard continued to lay still.

‘Stop acting’

Sungjin thought of just running in and slashing it with his sword, but,

‘Binding Frost!’

He recalled Munir’s spell and changed his mind. He transferred ‘Moon Specter’ to his right hand, and holding up his left hand he said

“Binding frost! Frostbite!”

The effects were amazing. Despite the desert heat, the immediate surrounding of the Lizard froze solid. The affected area was much larger than the last time he had tried. He definitely saw the benefit of having higher magic power.

Once the feet were frozen stiff, the Lizard stopped pretending to be inanimate and began trying to break free. It was no easy feat breaking free. Sungjin quickly ran up to the lizard

‘Crack’

The Lizard’s hide was extremely tough, but it could not stand up to Sungjin’s absolute stat superiority. Sungjin lifted up his sword and thought

‘It’s still one shot one kill’

Just then

‘Woosh’

A large tail came swinging towards his face. Sungjin quickly swung ‘Moon Specter’ and cut off the tail.

‘What?’

When he checked his surroundings, he saw the headless Lizard thrashing about mindlessly.

‘Ah... I forgot.’

Even if the head is cut off, the body will still stay alive for a little bit. Of course, it couldn’t launch any intentional attacks without a head, but being careful around it after beheading it was probably a good idea.

Calming his heart, he took a deep breath when two giant Scorpions came charging at him. Looking carefully, he saw a third behind the first two.

A total of three monsters. Not bad at all. It was not like normal mobs were capable of hurting even a single hair on his body.

‘Quick, come come.’

Sungjin charged towards the Scorpions. He cut through the claws of the first one, cut the side and the tail off the second, dodged an incoming claw attack, cut, evaded, cut, cut... The enemies quickly died. Sungjin thought,

‘Easy... Too easy.’

He nimbly moved his body and killed the first two Scorpions before the third arrived. It was time for one on one.

Two Scorpions were no match for him; one had no chance. Sungjin fixed his grip and waited for the last one to arrive. However, his field of view lowered as the sand started to sink rapidly.

“What?”

A hole appeared between his legs, and the sand rapidly drained into it.

Sungjin climbed up the sand and jumped out of the sinkhole. In the place he stood moments before, a grotesque vortex-like jaws of a Sandworm appeared from below.

Only the teeth were visible, yet the diameter of the mouth was easily six to seven meters wide. The Sandworm chomped the air twice where Sungjin stood before and disappeared back underground.

If Sungjin had stood in place, he would have been eaten feet first.

Sungjin didn't have time to sigh in relief; the Scorpion was upon him.

Sungjin prepared himself to fight, but his feet sank into the sand again. Without hesitating, Sungjin immediately jumped away from the spot.

A hole indicated where the sand would soon be sucked in, followed by the rapid sinking of the sand.

‘So annoying...’

Sungjin just barely got out of the area again. Ignoring the cascading sand, the Scorpion ran along the slope of the sand and continued to charge towards him.

In Sungjin's case, he preferred this; it gave him the opportunity to take care of the Scorpion first. Once he cut off the claws and the tails, he climbed on top of the Scorpion.

The Scorpion was completely disarmed and was helpless; it couldn't put up any resistance to Sungjin who rode it. Soon, the sand beneath the Scorpion began to sink.

‘It has come.’

Sungjin stabbed ‘Moon Specter’ deep into the Scorpion’s body.

‘Crack!’

The sword easily passed through the Scorpion and ended its life. When the Scorpion’s death throes stopped, the sand rapidly got sucked into a vortex and rows of jagged teeth appeared from the sand.

Sungjin jumped straight up from the Scorpion’s back. The Sandworm rose out of the sand and bit into the Scorpion instead.

‘Crunch Crunch’

It utterly crushed the shell of the Scorpion, devouring it in a few bites. The Sandworm showed signs of wanting to retreat into the sand, but before it had the chance, Sungjin aimed his hands towards the giant Sandworm and chanted

“Incinerate everything in your path! Fireball!”

A gigantic fireball flew into the Sandworm’s mouth. Moments later,

‘Boom’

An explosion went off inside the Sandworm’s body, and flames

violently billowed out of the ground. Fireball was a destructive spell; After the explosion, it also covered the area in flames.

And this very spell exploded from within the monster's body. It most likely couldn't have survived such an attack. Seeing the inferno raging on the sand due to the aftereffect of the attack, Sungjin finally took a sigh of relief.

“Whew... I forgot all about him...”

Sungjin had been moving through the raids based on his memories of the past, so enemies and elements of the raid he had forgotten about would occasionally surprise him.

‘If I had just read Dalupin's information sheet, I wouldn't have been caught off guard like that... I'll start reading it from now on.’

Sungjin reflected over his actions as he moved his feet. Due to his overwhelmingly superior stats, normal mobs couldn't hope to face him alone. The only problem he faced in the raid was his arrogance.

*

Each of the four hunters stood a distance away from each other, watching each other nervously. They were all sweating.

“Uh... Oh? Me...its on me!”

Bukitai's feet began to sink. He tried to climb out of the hole, but his feet sank faster than he could climb out.

“Catch!”

Munir threw his turban as a makeshift rope for Bukitai to grab. Bukitai put the shield on his back and grabbed onto the cloth.

Bukitai barely climbed out of the hole with Munir's assistance. Shortly after, rows of jagged teeth appeared within the vortex, and a sandworm finally showed itself.

“Now!”

Munir yelled as he fired his crossbows.

‘Pi Pi Pit’

The bolts embedded themselves deep into the sandworm's skin.

“Uoooh!”

‘Zealot’ Ralph jumped high up and brought down his axe upon the worm. Meanwhile, ‘Gladiator’ Igor mercilessly slashed and stabbed away at the sandworm's body.

“Kyoooo~”

The Sandworm let out a strange cry of agony as it began thrashing about twisting its body. The sandworm came out of the ground and swept around in a large circular area.

Munir was already far enough away, so he was able to get out of the way in time, but Bukitai and Ralph were hit straight on by the sweeping body of the thrashing sandworm and were flung away. The only one who was able to counter attack was Igor.

He found an indent in the ground and jumped into the depression. Laying in the sand, he held his sword up in the air.

The Sandworm, thrashing about wildly in pain, ran into the waiting blade; half of its body was cut away by the sword.

“Kyooo...”

The Sandworm fell into a heap and died. It had attacked five or six times before the hunters managed to take it down. Munir wiped the sweat off his brows.

“Whew... Scorpion and Lizards are hard enough, but this...”

And finally, he yelled after the two men who were flung away by the Sandworm’s attack.

“Hey, all of you, are you alright?”

The hunters raised their hands to show they were fine. Although they took damage, it wasn't anything lethal.

While the two hunters drank recovery potions, Igor scanned their surroundings, wary of any enemies that might be approaching.

In the distance, he saw dunes shifting rapidly despite no winds blowing. Igor called out to Bukitai.

“Hey, Mongolian, what's that over there?”

Bukitai gazed into the distance by squinting his eyes. And before he was about to report what he saw, the Operator beat him to the punch.

[Caution!]

[Boss 'Basilisk' has appeared!]

Everyone was alarmed by the Operator's announcement. Ralph replied first.

“Hmm? Didn't the information sheet say that the boss only

appears after 75% of the monsters were killed?”

Munir opened his eyes wide in surprise upon realization.

“We’ve already killed 75% of the mobs? It’s only been 20 minutes...”

Chapter 036 – Kutan Desert (3)

“Incinerate everything in your path! Fireball!”

Sungjin threw another fireball into a Sandworm’s mouth.

‘Boom’

Flames erupted from the Sandworm’s mouth, and the worm collapsed into a heap.

‘Geez, so much pain...’

Sungjin wiped the sweat off of his brows; he was throwing fireball in the midst of murderous heat. But at least the effects were good.

Spell attacks such as ‘Fireball’ was useful in taking out troublesome enemies like Sandworms from afar. And after using it a few times, Sungjin felt his mana starting to run low.

Sungjin’s Magic power was 1195, and MP was 6660. Fireball was a fourth circle spell, so it cost 4780; in other words, each cast consumed more than half the mana pool.

Due to its enormous mana consumption, after just a single cast of Fireball, Sungjin had to diligently cut away enemies using his ‘Moon Specter’.

‘Trading reusability for firepower...’

If the Magic power was too high, the spell power improved at the expense of mana cost. If Mind power was too high, the spells could be cast often, but at weaker effectiveness. Finding the proper proportion was important.

‘Mana... Got to refill mana...’

He pointed his left ring finger towards a flaming Sandworm.

“Lich’s Beckon”

The bones wrapped around his finger moved automatically to absorb mana on Sungjin’s behalf. While waiting for the mana restoration to finish, he held the magic Waterskin upside down over his head to take a shower.

Even though he had drenched himself, in just a minute or two, the water would evaporate off of him. After all, this was the desert.

“Ohh”

He had moved the waterskin to the back of his neck and involuntarily gasped to the rush of cold water running down his back. It was at this moment that the Operator gave an announcement.

[Caution!]

[Boss 'Basilisk' has appeared!]

“Mmm?”

Sungjin looked around in surprise, but he couldn't locate the Giant lizard 'Basilisk'. He asked the cube

“Operator, Raid progress?”

[75.8%]

The other Hunters must have pushed the raid progress past the 75% mark while Sungjin was busy cooling himself down. If that was the case, the boss had probably spawned close to the other Hunters.

Sungjin looked back at the direction he came from. The path was strewn about with corpses of Monsters he had killed, but he could see no sign of the other four Hunters nor the whereabouts of the Boss Monster.

If he lets this go unchecked, a similar situation to what happened

in Grey Soul Cemetery could occur.

‘What should I do?’

Sungjin considered his options for a moment and came up with a solution.

“Cain, come”

Sungjin summoned Cain. Cain took a look around his surroundings; he seemed unaccustomed to the desert scenery. Sungjin spoke softly into his ears.

“Cain use everything you’ve got, smell or sound... find the Hunters. Got it?”

“Woof”

And within a moment.

“Woof Woof!”

Cain barked twice, looking off into the distance.

“So it’s that way!”

Sungjin looked towards the direction Cain indicated.

“Swift Paw!”

He deployed the wolf claws and prepared to run alongside Cain.

“Let’s go, Cain!”

Cain took two steps and stopped moving. Sungjin paused to look at him.

“What’s wrong?”

Cain was in an unnatural state. Cain stared at Sungjin with his tongue hanging out.

“Ah...”

The cause of his behavior was obvious; even with Arabic clothing, drenched in water and with a turban over his head, Sungjin was suffering from the dreadful heat. For Cain, who sported a lush winter coat, it must be beyond the level of torture.

Forget running; he looked in pain just sitting there.

“Yeah I don’t think this is right. Go back Cain. Unsummon.”

Sungjin transformed Cain back into a wooden figurine. Then

looking in the direction Cain had shown him, he began running. Alone.

*

The four Hunters quickly raised their weapons. The boss ‘Basilisk’ made its appearance in the distant sand dune.

It stood at an imposing height, double that of the other lizards. If ancient dinosaurs had still existed, it would have probably looked something like that.

“Kuuoo!”

It bellowed, and the whole desert reverberated with the echo of the boss’s cry. The Hunters exchanged glances. Igor spoke up.

“As you all saw in the information sheet, looking at the eyes causes petrification. Munir, you fight it from behind and don’t look at its face. Watch out for the tail.”

Munir nodded. Igor continued.

“Ralph... is zealot or whatnot ready?”

He had somehow taken the position of the leader among the Hunters, and they accepted it without question.

The three others were all skilled in their own ways, but after a few hunts they knew; Igor was on a different level altogether.

“It’s ready to go at any time. It’s just... once I use it, my HP drops to half. Look.”

Ralph raised his axe up for them to see.

Thorfinn – Zealot’s Axe

Heroic Axe – Strength S Dexterity C

Passive Skill

Rampage (II)

Each strike against the same enemy increases damage by 20%.

Max 3 Stacks

Active Skill

Zealot (II)

For 30 seconds, increases damage by 200% and attack speed by 200%

Once active duration ends, reduces current hp by half. 5 Minute Cooldown

Everyone read the information on the Axe

“As you can see... it’s quite a useful active skill, but in return when the timer’s up, it becomes extremely dangerous. So... Please protect me.”

Igor scanned the item one more time and replied

“I’ll give you a sign when I think it’s safe, or if there is a good opportunity to use it.”

Ralph bit his lower lip and nodded. Igor addressed the tank Bukitai last.

“Bukitai, try to keep its attention on you without looking at its eyes.”

Bukitai responded, blinking blankly

“But... how do I block the attacks without looking up?”

“Watch the ground. With that size, you should be able to predict its movement by watching the shadows.”

Bukitai dropped his shoulders in dejection.

“That’s easy to say...”

“Just try to survive. I’ll be helping as well.”

Bukitai nodded at his reassurance. Once the strategy meeting was over, Igor tilted his head towards the boss and said

“Ok then, let’s go”

Bukitai walked forward using his shield to block out the Basilisk’s eyes. After covering some distance

“Kuuwargh!”

The Basilisk let out a mighty roar, and the earth began to tremble, shifting the sands. Igor shouted out

“It’s coming! Brace yourselves!”

Bukitai tried to peek ahead of him. Upon seeing the Basilisk’s

giant legs moving towards him, he tensed up.

‘Shadows... watch the shadows...’

But it was no easy feat trying to predict an enemy’s motion relying on nothing but shadows. He didn’t make any attempt to look up and kept his eyes glued on the feet.

Right leg, left leg, right leg, left leg. Soon its shadow covered the area surrounding Bukitai. The boss kicked using its right leg, and Bukitai positioned his shield to block.

‘Bang!’

The Giant Basilisk’s claws collided with Bukitai’s shield, and he was pushed back. Despite it all, he shouted,

“Quickly! Attack!”

From afar, Munir shot his Crossbow bolts

‘Sh sh ssh’

“Uryah!”

Ralph’s battle cry rang out. But Bukitai did not turn to look around, afraid that he might accidentally look into the Basilisk’s

eye.

‘Woosh’

The Giant Lizard kicked him again. From the right, and then left, and then right again. Watching the shadows, Bukitai continued to block the Lizard’s attack. He shouted once again to the other Hunters.

“I won’t last too long!”

It was at this time.

‘Slither’

Something slimy and gross wrapped around his body, and lifted him up in the air.

Caught by surprise, Bukitai looked up to see. The elongated tongue of the Basilisk had wrapped around him.

“Wha...”

Once lifted up into the air, he began thrashing about to get loose. But by accident, he looked into the Basilisk’s amber eyes.

“Ack”

Bukitai instantly became rigid. He was still conscious, but he was like a vegetable.

‘Move... I’ve got to move!’

The Basilisk brought Bukitai closer to swallow him. Then,

‘Woosh woosh woosh woosh’

A round shield flew like a frisbee and struck against the Basilisk’s tongue.

“Kaaooo~!”

The Basilisk’s tongue was cut halfway through, and Bukitai dropped to the ground like a stone. Even after reaching the ground, he was unable to move.

But he could still see. The round shield which cut the Basilisk’s tongue continued to fly for a bit and returned back into Igor’s hands. It was a normal looking round shield, so Bukitai had no idea how such a feat was possible. Meanwhile

“Wa...”

He could speak again. Quickly, he tried to move his arms and legs and found that they were beginning to respond to his will. The

paralysis lasted only about 3 to 4 seconds.

Bukitai lifted his shield up and tried to block the Basilisk's legs again. But the Basilisk stepped out of the way and ran past him.

The Boss was now chasing Igor, who had cut his tongue. And meanwhile, there was an unintended collateral damage.

“Eek!”

Ralph had accidentally looked into the basilisk's eye while slashing away at the monster's side. Stunned in place, he was kicked and flung away by the Lizard.

And there was another casualty. Munir.

“Help! Save me!”

He was caught by the Basilisk's tail and was hanging in the air.

‘It's all my fault... I didn't do my job correctly.’

Bukitai blamed himself as he made his way towards the Basilisk. But then, he heard a familiar voice.

“So, It wasn't too late.”

Even before he turned to see, the speaker continued.

“Let me borrow your shoulder, friend.”

Someone stepped on his shoulder. Bukitai naturally gazed up. The missing member, Master Hunter Kei, stood on top of his shoulder and jumped off.

The Master Hunter leapt towards the Basilisk's head. However, while Kei was in mid-air, the Basilisk seemed to have sensed something approaching and turned to face its assailant. The Basilisk's eyes met with Kei's. Bukitai shouted out in spite of himself.

“No!”

Looking into the Monster's eyes was a death sentence. But Master Hunter got a full view of both.

“Damn it!”

Bukitai ran forward to rescue the Hunter. But he heard the Master Hunter shout

“Free Ark!”

And with the shout, Kei plunged his sword deep into the Basilisk's eye.

“Kaaoo!”

The Basilisk shouted louder than ever before. Kei spun in the air and landed in front of the giant Lizard.

“Stupid lizard and your annoying beady eyes...”

The Basilisk reflectively used its legs to kick Kei.

‘Woosh’

It was an incredibly fast attack. But somehow Kei easily dodged it. Only sand remained in the place where he stood moments before.

While Bukitai was staring with his mouth wide open, Kei snuck to the side of the Basilisk. He raised his hands high and shouted an incantation.

“Incinerate everything in your path! Fireball!”

His eyes were facing towards the ground, but the Fireball from his hand landed squarely on the basilisk’s other eye.

“Kaaaa~!!!”

Basilisk cried out in agony. Bukitai took a look around. The Basilisk, now blinded, was thrashing wildly with its legs.

‘This should be easy now’

Bukitai was filled with newfound courage and charged towards the Basilisk. He heard Igor shout out as well.

“Ralph! Now!”

And from afar he heard Ralph’s voice.

“Kill... Kill! I will kill you fucking Lizard!”

He shouted strange things, but it was fine. The four hunters, no five now along with Kei who had been missing all this time, simultaneously poured their attacks against the blinded Basilisk.

Chapter 037 – Kutan Desert (4)

“Baaak~!”

Boss “Basilisk” let out a weird cry of pain as it collapsed on the spot. The Operator soon gave out an announcement.

[Boss ‘Basilisk’ defeated]

[Raid Cleared!]

[You will be returned to Hunter’s Hall in 1 hour 29 minutes and 44 seconds.]

Bukitai yelled out loud

“Hey! Are you all alright?”

“I’m alright.”

Igor responded from next to him. He was drenched in sweat, but not a single injury marked his body.

“I’m... also ok.”

Ralph replied, still laying on the floor, raising his Axe. He was exhausted after pouring a long chain of attacks on the boss under the effects of ‘Zealot’.

He looked fatigued, but otherwise had no major injury on him. Last was Munir, but he was nowhere to be seen.

“Alhamdulillah”

Munir was on his knees praying to the heavens. He was caught by the tail and flung in the air, but he also appeared to be well without any life threatening injury. All three of his comrades were okay.

“Whew...”

Bukitai let out a sigh of relief. For one reason or another, he

assumed the role of a tank in the raids, but whenever someone died, it felt like it was his fault, even when it wasn't necessarily true.

Meanwhile, he heard a voice coming from above.

“Well, since everyone looks like they're alright...”

The hunters looked up at the speaker. Kei, who's been missing the entire raid, was standing on top of the dead Basilisk.

“If you all will excuse me, I'll get going then.”

He hopped and slid down the tail of the Basilisk as if skating and then took off, running into the distance. He ran as if his life depended on it.

Bukitai muttered under his breath upon seeing him leave.

“Where is he going? Raid is already over...”

That man was full of mystery. But it was alright. The raid was over, and the hunters were no longer in a rush. They could rest and take it easy.

Thanks to the large body of the Basilisk, it provided shade from the desert sun. The remaining four hunters sat together under the shade. Ralph tapped the side of the Lizard with his axe and asked

“Anyone see its eyes? I couldn’t move when I saw it.”

Bukitai nodded.

“Yes, the paralysis was terrifying.”

Munir replied, biting his lips.

“I thought it was over for me when it grabbed me with its tail, especially when I fell on the ground. Thank God it was sand and not hard earth... Otherwise, I would have been sent to the Almighty.”

Bukitai remembered something and turned to Igor.

“Ah, that’s right. Thank you, Igor, you have my gratitude. You saved me back there. Thanks to your boomerang-like round shield.”

Unlike the three other men who were gossiping about the earlier battle, Igor simply nodded to Bukitai instead of speaking up.

‘How did you do that with the shield earlier?’

Bukitai wanted to ask. But he couldn’t. Igor did not look happy despite the raid being complete. Bukitai passed that off as just being Igor’s quirk.

‘Since Russians are naturally cold people...’

However, Igor soon opened his mouth.

“Hey.”

Everyone turned to look at him. But the target of Igor’s attention was not a man, but the Operator’s Cube.

“Operator, what’s my current raid contribution?”

[Your Contribution is 10.3%]

Now everyone was staring at Igor’s cube. Igor’s face twisted in both anger and disappointment. He looked side to side at the others and said

“Quick, check your contributions too!”

One by one, the hunters did as he bid.

‘Zealot’ Ralph:

[Your Contribution is 6.3%]

‘High-Level Scout’ Munir:

[Your Contribution is 5.9%]

Last, ‘High-Level Guardian’ Bukitai

[Your Contribution is 7.1%]

All the hunters were shocked at their levels of contribution. Ralph was first to comment.

“How can this be? I have never earned less than 20% contribution in any raid. Especially once I’ve received this axe...”

Bukitai snorted and added

“...Hmm... Since the 2nd chapter I was always in the first place...”

Munir stroked his beard as he replied

“Me too...”

It was an unbelievable situation. Each of the four hunters had always maintained a minimum contribution level of 20% per raid, and yet all four combined now reached just 29.6%. Slightly short of 30% of the total. There was only one possible explanation.

“That Chinese man...”

Igor whispered. The others stared at him. Kei had disappeared once more into the distant desert landscape. Ralph stared off into the distance and commented

“No wonder the boss just randomly appeared...”

Igor suddenly stood up and addressed the other men.

“Listen all, Let’s use whatever remaining time we have left to hunt monsters. What are we doing here, resting? Let’s go try and secure even one more point.”

The remaining three hunters glanced at each other. And without complaint, all three stood up. They realized that this was the best course of action.

In any given chapter, earning even a single more black coin meant having an easier time in the future chapters. The hunters picked up their weapons and began to move back into the desert.

*

Meanwhile, Sungjin was dashing through the desert dunes. There was only one reason to why he was running; searching for the hidden piece. The scorching sun and the heat were intolerable. Sungjin wanted nothing more than to finish quickly and return to ‘Ninety Nine Nights’ for a nice bath and rest.

But this damnable desert seemed to never end. He had been searching ever since he had killed the raid boss, but he didn’t even run into the boundary line. The only thing breaking the monotony were lizards who from time to time ambushed him from blind spots.

‘So annoying...’

Lizards were killed with a single slash of his sword. After a while, Sungjin stopped for a moment.

He surveyed his surroundings while showering with the magic

waterskin. But nowhere did he find anything of interest as far as his eyes could see.

“Haa... Where is it?”

He couldn't help but be tempted to activate treasure hunter, but he held himself.

There was no way to know how things would progress later. He decided to continue searching for a little longer.

“Operator, is Swift Paw off cooldown?”

[It is available for use.]

He had used it earlier when searching for the boss, and the cooldown had already ended. Sungjin activated Swift Paw and began combing the desert.

During his search, he found something peculiar in the distance. In the endless ocean of sand, there was an area with a bluish glow.

‘Oasis!’

Sungjin, filled with renewed vigor, ran towards the Oasis. There was no doubt in his mind that the Oasis would hide a ‘Hidden

place' or a 'Hidden boss'.

But after running for a while, the Oasis disappeared from view.

“Wait..”

Mirage. It was a phenomenon that occurred due to light bending over long distances above hot terrain. Sungjin was aware of such a phenomena, but seeing it for real, he couldn't help but be disappointed.

Sungjin took a look around. This time, the Oasis was located behind him. He ran towards the Oasis.

And soon, he began to run slower and slower. The Swift Paw active time had run out.

‘The timing...’

Now he had to wait for another five minutes before Swift Paw was available for use. Furthermore, at Sungjin's dismay, the same thing happened where the Oasis would disappear and appear behind him.

Whenever he would get close to the Oasis, it would disappear like a wisp of smoke. The water and green plants growing by the water's edge would dissipate into sand dunes without a trace.

Sungjin felt like he was under some illusion spell.

‘Damn it...’

But he couldn’t give up. Once more, he searched for the Oasis. This time, it was in the distance off to the side.

‘I don’t even have Swift Paw...’

But he had no choice. Sungjin diligently climbed the dune and made his way towards the Oasis. And once again, the Oasis disappeared before he got there.

The mirage had again disappeared, and nothing but sand dunes remained. Sungjin was now utterly frustrated and annoyed. He had chased nothing but illusion three times now and felt like someone was toying with him.

He faced the sky and shouted at the top of his lungs

“Fuck!”

It was then that he saw something flying towards him from a distance. It had a Lion’s body with a Human face, sporting a giant pair of wings on its back.

“Sphinx?”

Sungjin prepared to fight. He must have discovered a hidden boss by coincidence. In one hand he prepared his ‘Moon Specter’ and the other, he pointed towards the Sphinx.

Once it reached his targeting range, he began the incantation.

“Incinerate everything in your path!”

[Warning.]

The Operator began an announcement. He knew the next words.

‘Hidden boss has appeared.’

But

[Attacking a non-hostile lifeform will cause penalties from the Raid Rewards.]

Unlike what he was expecting, he got an entirely different warning message. Sungjin hastily canceled the casting of the spell. Not too long after, the Sphinx landed in front of Sungjin.

The Sphinx wasn't as large as he had thought. The body was about the size of an elephant. It was just that the wings were twice as long as its body, so it greatly exaggerated the size of the Sphinx.

Sungjin looked up at the Sphinx's face. It was only after their eyes met that the Sphinx began to speak.

“Young wanderer in the desert, what do you seek?”

Sungjin answered simply.

“The Oasis.”

“I see. I will take you to the Oasis if you are able to answer my riddle. How about it? Will you like to try my riddle?”

Sungjin nodded. Sungjin's behavior seemed to upset the Sphinx.

It asked again.

“Answer with your words. Young Wanderer, will you try to answer my riddle?”

It was another strange character. Without understanding why he was insisting on a verbal reply, Sungjin decided to comply with its wishes.

“...Yes of course.”

“Good. Here is the riddle. What is the creature that walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon and three in the evening?”

It was a question he had heard many times in the past. Sungjin already knew the answer.

“The Answer is Man.”

“Why is that so?”

“Man crawls on all fours as a baby, then walks on two feet as an adult, and then uses a walking stick in old age.”

“That is correct. But of course, this is only common sense. I was only testing your common sense. Now I shall give you the real riddle. Are you prepared?”

Sungjin frowned. The Sphinx did not appear to be an honest and forthcoming character. But unlike the Wandering Merchant Ruff Han, it didn't seem like a character he could threaten at the sword point.

Noting that Sungjin did not answer, it asked him again.

“I ask again. Are you prepared to receive the true riddle?”

It appeared that this creature just loves asking questions. Sungjin decided to act in accordance with its wishes.

“Yes, I am prepared.”

Finally, the Sphinx told Sungjin the actual riddle.

“Good. Now, Listen well, and answer carefully.”

Sungjin focused his attention to the Sphinx and watched its lips. The Sphinx spoke out the riddle.

“What is the first cut, the proof of ties? This, owned by all, is utterly useless; and yet without it, you cannot exist. What is this?”

Chapter 038 – Kutan Desert (5)

Sungjin briefly thought about it for a moment.

‘First cut... proof of ties...’

And in less than 10 seconds, he came up with the answer. Sungjin looked up at the Sphinx. It was watching him full of anticipation. It seems like waiting for an answer gave the Sphinx quite a thrill. Sungjin gave his answer.

“It’s Belly button.”

The Sphinx’s expression changed dramatically.

“Eh? Why?”

“First injury that everyone has... Belly button. Proof that we were once connected to our mothers, so in many ways it is a proof of our ties. I couldn’t have been born without a belly button... but it has no uses anymore, so it is useless.”

“ ... ”

The Sphinx stared at Sungjin with an undecipherable expression. Sungjin rested his hand on the handle of ‘Moon Specter’. It was possible that the Sphinx might rapidly change its behavior unexpectedly like in the case of ‘Wandering Merchant Aindell’.

‘If that’s the case... the Sphinx would be the hidden boss.’

But

“...Correct. How did you get the answer so quickly?”

That’s all the Sphinx wanted to know. Sungjin didn’t reply.

“I thought you would take at least 10 seconds... no, even 30 seconds to consider the answer. Why were you so confident about your answer?”

“Ok, that’s enough. Take me to the Oasis.”

The Sphinx replied looking down at Sungjin.

“...Yes, a promise is a promise. Can you ride on my back?”

Sungjin hopped on its front paws and climbed on top of its back. The Sphinx addressed him once he got on.

“Grab on tight. If you fall off before you reach the Oasis and die, it’ll be a shame, right?”

As soon as he spoke, the Sphinx took off into the air without waiting for a reply. Sungjin got the high altitude view of the desert from the Sphinx’s back.

Once they climbed higher, he could see the Oasis off in the

distance. Sphinx flew towards the Oasis with a powerful beat of its wings.

*

Meanwhile, the others were roaming the map. They were combing the desert for any monsters that remained so that they could get their hands on even a single more coin.

Two Giant Lizards came charging at the group at the same time. Bukitai shouted from the vanguard.

“Here they come! Get ready!”

“Frostbite!”

Munir slowed the advance of one Lizard, and the four hunters focused fired on the other Lizard. Of course, the one leading the charge was Bukitai.

But even before he reached the first lizard, the ground began to shift. Bukitai shouted out, alarmed.

“Sandworm! There’s a Sandworm!”

The hunters immediately backed off from the spot. Even the Lizards quickly got out of the way. Moments later

“Queh~”

A giant Sandworm emerged from the ground and burrowed itself again.

“Spread out! Make room!”

Igor shouted. This was the standard procedure for fighting Sandworms. The Sandworms could only create one tunnel at a time.

Standing apart from each other meant only one person could be targeted at a time.

When the hole emerged from underneath one person, others could rescue him while focus firing on the Sandworm once it emerged. Using this strategy, the hunters had killed several Sandworms until now.

The problem was, that there were also two Lizards in the mix, complicating things. One of the Lizard charged Bukitai and swung at him with a paw.

Bukitai lifted up his shield to block the attack, but he wasn't able to devote his attention to the enemy. He was distracted by the thought that the sandworm might appear beneath his feet. To make matters worse, the other Lizard also charged at him and targeted him.

“Munir, can you use magic?”

“I am out of Mana!”

‘...damn.’

Bukitai swore under his breath. If he had to face the Sandworm and both Lizards at the same time, he would be in grave danger. But he heard shouts from the back.

“Uh... It’s on me! Me!”

It was Ralph’s voice. Bukitai couldn’t help but let out a sigh of relief.

While he held off the Lizards, the other two could rescue Ralph, defeat the Sandworm and then come to his aid.

“Help me! Igor! Munir!”

It was unfortunate that Ralph became the target, but he should be okay since he had capable teammates such as Igor and Munir. However,

“Ahhh!”

He heard Ralph cry out in pain. Bukitai was surprised. He wanted

to look back to check, but he was under the combined attack of two Giant Lizards. He couldn't look away from the fight.

He continued to swing his mace and block with his shield as he shouted back.

“Ralph? What happened?”

There was no answer from Ralph. All he heard was

‘Sh sh ssh’

Munir's bolts

‘Woosh woosh woosh woosh’

Igor's flying shield.

“Keeeee~”

And the sound of the Sandworm's death throes. He didn't know what had happened, but they were able to kill off the Sandworm. Bukitai took the time to shout back while facing the Lizards.

“Ralph are you alright? Munir, Igor, give me a hand.”

But there was no response. If they had managed to kill the

Sandworm, Igor should have come running in with his sword, along with Munir's covering fire.

Bukitai backed off from the Lizards to take a look behind him. Seeing the scene, he froze for a moment.

Next to the dead Sandworm was Ralph, missing his lower half. And standing with their weapons down were Igor and Munir, who were just watching him.

Bukitai shouted at them.

“What are you doing? Help me!”

He had looked away for too long. One of the Lizard managed to land a strike on his side with its long claws.

“Ack!”

Bukitai, pierced by claws, swung his mace to strike the Lizard's hand.

“Kaa...”

The Lizard cried out and retreated its claws. But the other Lizard came to strike at him.

“I said help me!”

Bukitai shouted, but neither of them took up their weapons. Bukitai fiercely put up resistance with his weapon, but he couldn't outlast the two enemies.

One Lizard pierced his shoulder with long claws, and the other knocked the shield out of his hands.

Disarmed, Bukitai was ripped apart to pieces by the Lizards. Until his final moments, Bukitai stood even as he was ripped apart by the Lizards, staring at Munir and Igor who watched him die, whispering

“Munir... Igor... Why...?”

Once Bukitai died standing, Igor finally spoke.

“I'll take the right, distract the left.”

Munir nodded.

“Got it.”

As instructed, he pointed towards the Lizard on the left.

“Binding Frost! Frostbite!”

While the Lizard was slowed, Munir began firing upon the Lizard.

“Kaa!”

The Lizard cried out in agony as the bolts found their target. Meanwhile, the other Lizard began a fight with Igor. He calmly blocked the claws with his shield as he surgically wielded his sword, removing the Lizard’s foot, tongue, tail, and finally the head.

‘Incredible...’

Munir thought as he continued to snipe the remaining lizard from afar.

After turning into a porcupine from Munir’s Crossbow bolts, the Lizard was beheaded by Igor without having a chance to properly attack even once.

Once the combat was over, Munir walked up to Igor.

“Good work.”

Igor did not respond to him. He only asked the Operator

“Contribution?”

[Your Contribution is 20.7%]

Munir also checked his own contribution.

[Your Contribution is 11.4%.]

Each of their contributions had doubled from before. Munir let out a toothy grin as he offered his hands in a handshake with Igor.

“It was good doing business with you.”

Igor also smiled and grasped his hand.

“Yes, it was.”

When Igor returned the handshake, Munir asked Igor

“Why did you pick me, though? Why not offer the same to someone else?”

Igor answered while shaking his hands

“First of all... because you had the lowest contribution amongst us. I thought that you would not refuse.

Munir nodded.

“That seems logical. Anything else?”

“Second... You are the weakest. I am certain I can win in 1 on 1.”

“Excuse me?”

While Munir was confused, Igor took his sword and cut off Munir’s hand which he was holding.

“Ahhh!”

Munir stepped back, holding the stump of his hands.

“You...”

Igor calmly walked up to him.

Munir quickly shouted

“Frostbite!”

The magic took hold and held Igor in place. Igor was unable to move for a moment. Munir shouted at him to complain.

“You said there’s penalty for direct attacks against others!”

But Igor’s expression could not possibly get any colder. Penalty or not, Igor has decided to kill him. Once Munir realized this, he began to run away.

‘Crunch crunch crunch’

He could hear one foot crushing the ice.

‘Crunch crunch crunch crunch’

Now he heard two feet walking on the ice. Igor had begun his chase. Munir turned around and cast another spell.

“Frostbite!”

Igor was rooted in place again. But, this time, the Operator gave out a warning.

[Low Mana. Less than 10% remaining.]

‘Not enough mana...’

He had lied to Bukitai earlier, but now it was for real. He only had one shot left. He had to run away as far as he could and hide until the raid ended. In the long run, he held the advantage if he could get some distance between them since he originally came from a desert country. With this in mind, he climbed on top of a large dune. But...

‘Woosh woosh woosh woosh’

Igor’s shield came flying and hit Munir’s calf.

“Ahh!”

Munir fell, holding his leg. Unfortunately, he tumbled down the side of the dune towards Igor.

Igor freed himself from the spell and continued to walk towards Munir. Out of mana, missing his primary arm, Munir had no choice open to him except to beg for mercy.

“Igor you told me yourself, you’ll receive a penalty if you kill other people! Why are you doing this?”

But Igor did not respond, stabbing Munir with his sword instead. He held the sword until Munir died.

[You have killed your fellow Hunter. Entering 'Troll' state.]
[Hunters in 'Troll' state receive 10% penalty to Raid Rewards.]
[And in the event that the Troll is killed by other hunters,]
[It will not inflict the 'Troll' state on the attacker.]

After listening to the Operator's explanation, Igor told Munir, who lay bleeding out on the desert sand, his reason.

“Even taking on the 10% penalty, killing you is more profitable.”

Of course, Munir was unable to hear him.

*

At that moment, Sungjin was sailing through the air, riding on the back of the Sphinx. Once the Oasis grew close enough to see clearly, the Sphinx addressed him.

“Hold on tight, human. It would be a shame to die after coming all this way, wouldn't it?”

The Sphinx suddenly initiated a high-speed dive. Sungjin had no choice but to hang on for his life.

‘... couldn’t he just fly slower?’

But even before he was done complaining, the Sphinx touched down close to the Oasis.

‘Boom’

The Operator let out a congratulatory message.

[Congratulations! You have discovered the hidden Oasis]
[Suleman!]

Jumping off the Sphinx’s back, Sungjin complained.

“Hey, couldn’t you just descend slowly?”

The Sphinx looked Sungjin square in the eye and answered

“Next time answer slower. Otherwise, it’s no fun for the person giving the riddle, no?”

“So you did that on purpose?”

Sungjin bubbled in anger and reached for his sword.

“Well then bye. See you later if we ever have another chance.”

Sphinx quickly returned to the sky and flew away. Sungjin stared after him for a moment.

‘You appear again?’

He didn’t want to meet him again if he could help it. Once the Sphinx had disappeared far into the distance, Sungjin turned his gaze towards the Oasis. In the end, he did, in fact, manage to reach the ‘Hidden Place’.

Sungjin rubbed his hands together in anticipation as he began to look around the Oasis.

‘Let’s see... where could the treasures be hidden?’

Chapter 039 – Kutan Desert (6)

Sungjin walked around the Oasis alone. The water in the oasis was dirtier than he had imagined.

In movies or cartoons, characters are usually depicted running into the water to swim or drink from it, but Sungjin felt no such inclinations.

‘Maybe if I was dying of thirst...’

Sungjin held the magic waterskin above his head upside down as he walked in circles around the Oasis. The Oasis covered a small area; It took less than 1 minute to walk the circumference of it.

He couldn’t spot anything special about it; he had been hoping for clues about the ‘hidden pieces’, but there was nothing.

‘So... what now?’

Sungjin thought to himself as he gazed into the water. And then suddenly, something sparkly caught his eyes. Sungjin stared at it.

In the center of the Oasis, there stood a large palm tree. And on top of the tree sat a grody old lamp.

‘Found it!’

Sungjin thought, and he stepped into the Oasis. However

‘Foof’

Something popped out from within the murky waters. Sungjin jumped back in surprise. It was a crocodile. An extremely large one at that.

‘Crocodile? In the desert?’

Sungjin checked the cube. It did not say anything. It wasn’t a hidden boss.

Sungjin shifted his gaze back to the Crocodile. It was preparing to launch a follow-up attack after its failed ambush, but nothing except the hidden boss could possibly give Sungjin trouble.

“You surprised me, dumb animal!”

Nevertheless, the crocodile died with just a few slashes. Alert, in case there were more crocodiles waiting, Sungjin cautiously made his way deeper into the Oasis.

The Oasis was shallow enough to walk into it. And there didn’t appear to be any other Crocodiles. Without further trouble, Sungjin was able to reach the Palm tree growing in the center of the Oasis.

Once he was within arm's reach of the tree, Sungjin returned the 'Moon Specter' back into the sheath and climbed the tree.

'Hmm... I should try to learn some sort of flight spell.'

Being able to fly would be extremely helpful getting around, and searching for the 'Hidden Boss' and the 'Hidden pieces'.

'I'll have to remember to look around the Black market.'

Making a mental note for himself for later, Sungjin arrived at the top of the Palm tree. There, the lamp lay gently enshrined in the center of the palm leaves.

Worn out Lamp

Normal Ornament

Active Skill

Rub (I)

Rub the lamp. Effects are unknown.

A Lamp, worn out due to age and weathering.

Though, it would have been a work of art at the time of its creation.

‘Hmm...’

The part about ‘Effects are unknown’ caught his attention. Sungjin placed the lamp into his pocket and slid down the Palm tree. He walked out of the oasis and inspected the item.

The lamp was caked with dirt and extremely ancient looking. But, in between the scum built up over the years, the sun’s reflection he saw from underneath the grime gave proof of its golden material.

‘I wonder what it’ll do...’

Sungjin first checked his surroundings, and then began to scrub away at the lamp. Soon, smoke emitting a dim blue light began to billow out of the lamp.

Sungjin recalled the folklore; Legend of Genie in the lamp

granting wishes.

‘Wish... Hmm... What should I wish for?’

Filled with anticipation, Sungjin watched the smoke build up. But... the smoke continued to billow out for a long while.

‘Come on... Come on...’

The lamp continued to smoke for what felt like an eternity.

‘What... What’s that?’

Sungjin looked up at the sky and jumped back in surprise. High above, a large gathering of clouds formed the figure of a giant. Only his upper body was done forming, and already it was as tall as a five storey building. He was gargantuan.

Sungjin stared up at the giant.

‘Yeah... Bigger means he can grant better wishes, right?’

*

After killing all of his teammates, Igor called out to the Operator.

“Operator, what is my contribution now?”

[Your contribution is 26.4%]

It was as he had planned. Munir had 11.4% before he died. Igor had received exactly half of Munir's contribution upon his death.

The other half had most likely gone to the Chinese man. Igor rubbed his sword and shield together.

And for a moment he looked up at the sky. The sun continued to cook his body.

'I even took desert simulation training... but the reality is much worse. Wait... is this even real?'

He lay against the side of the lizard and closed his eyes. But...

'Igor Janović! You must train harder for the sake of our Motherland!'

A voice inside his head woke him up. Looking up at the sky, he spoke to himself.

"Why does the Motherland matter in this situation? Does the Motherland even exist anymore?"

However, his superior officer was not here to listen to his complaint. He thought to himself.

‘Would he be fighting too? Somewhere in this world?’

He would have most likely survived. In the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB) where Igor received his military training, every man and woman were professionally trained for survival.

And the instructor who mentored Igor was a Specialist among specialists in survival skills and tactics. Unless, of course, he was very unlucky. No, even if he were unlucky with his teammates, he would have still survived somehow.

He would have killed all his teammates, like Igor, to take all the reward for himself. Igor asked the Operator for the time.

“How much time do I have left?”

[1 hour and 5 minutes left in the raid.]

‘1 hour and 5 minutes...’

With the exception of the mysterious 5% he could never locate, there was still 2.3% left in the raid completion. Igor stood up again.

Perfection, or the closest to it; his training demanded it of him. Igor moved back into the desert to fulfill his due diligence.

Occasionally Giant Lizards or Giant Scorpions came attacking Igor, but he could defeat them 1v1 without much difficulty.

Of course, he did not find it easy when two or three appeared at the same time. But, animals were still animals; these monsters were simply larger and stronger than the earthen kind. Their intelligence level was still low.

Simple tricks he learned in the Spetsnaz scattered the enemy, and he could resume to facing them one by one with brutal efficiency.

After hunting for a long while, he could not see any more enemies. All he could see intermittently were corpses lying in pieces, scattered about.

Upon close inspection, all of the corpses showed signs of cuts made by a Japanese katana. The culprit was most certainly the mysterious Chinese man.

‘...Chinese...’

He asked the Operator.

“Raid Completion level?”

[94.2%]

Igor thought for a moment.

‘Again... 5% is missing.’

He did not understand why he could never fill the completion level to 100%. Even when he made sure that there was nothing left alive, there was always 5% remaining. But that did not stop Igor.

He may not understand the requirements to fill the last 5%, but he will try until the very end. That was his training and his philosophy.

After combing the desert for a good long time, finally, he found a lizard aimlessly roaming around, lost and alone. After killing the lizard,

[95%.]

He finally reached 95% completion. He knew there were no more monsters left to find. After several chapters, he confirmed this as the truth.

‘...Just where is the last 5%...’

And while he was pondering, somewhere in the distance,

‘Rumble’

He heard something strange. It was familiar, but something he never expected to hear in the desert.

‘Lightning storm?’

Igor stared off into the distance. Very far away, he could see that a large cloud had formed. Under it, he could also see a spec of green.

‘Oasis?’

He was planning on resting after hunting the last Lizard, but he immediately made his way towards the Oasis. He felt convinced that whatever was happening over there held answers about the mysterious 5% which had eluded him thus far.

Igor slapped his shins and spoke a single command.

“Forced March”

The armor on his shins folded outward, clanging away until it

covered his feet completely. And with enhanced speed, he ran towards the Oasis.

*

The Giant who emerged from the lamp looked down upon Sungjin and asked,

“Who has awoken me?”

Filled with anticipation, Sungjin answered.

“Me! I have!”

“Really?”

The Giant stared for a moment and began his introduction.

“I am the most powerful mage to have ever lived in Kutan, [Soldamyr](#).”

Sungjin nodded. He predicted the follow-up phrase.

‘Make a wish. I shall grant you anything that your heart desires.’

But he was completely wrong. What he heard was

“I shall test you to see if you have the right to become my master.”

The cube, which had stayed quiet when the Sphinx and the Crocodile appeared, suddenly let out an announcement.

[Warning! Hidden boss]

[The Great Genie ‘Soldamyr’ has appeared!]

“What?!”

Sungjin threw away the lamp in surprise and pulled out his sword. But the Genie ‘Soldamyr’ had already begun casting his first spell.

“Murderous thunder, Jump from foe to foe!”

Bright ball of light gathered in his hands and soon poured out towards Sungjin.

“Chain Lightning!”

Sungjin tumbled away, but the lightning landed on the Oasis, and also struck Sungjin.

“Ack”

Sungjin couldn't help but cry out. Even though he dodged the main body of the spell, it was still a powerful strike.

‘But why?’

Sungjin thought for a moment. Now that he looked at himself, he saw that he was still dripping wet.

Getting electrocuted despite dodging the spell was probably due to that. Sungjin quickly moved away from the Oasis. Soldamyr changed his spell.

“Incinerate everything in your Path! Fireball!”

The Genie's fireball was at least twice as thick in diameter. Sungjin retreated while wrapping himself in ‘Sael's Breath’ and shouted.

“Solidify!”

‘Boom’

The fireball exploded and lit the surroundings on fire. It was a powerful boss. Incomparable to the bosses he had fought until now.

Sungjin quickly took out the ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’ from his vest. He had been saving it all this time to try it out on the Hidden boss anyway. It was a great time to test it.

But Soldamyr continued to shout incantations.

“Lance which pierces all! Lightning Bolt!”

Sungjin quickly tumbled away and dodged the spell.

‘Boom’

The sand where it landed was scorched black.

‘I need an opportunity to read the book...’

The only weakness with the ‘books’ was that like magic ‘casting’, it required ‘reading’ time. Sungjin thought of using Cain, but he had already summoned and unsummoned Cain.

‘What should I do...?’

Sungjin considered his options. The Crocodile corpse came into view.

“Lightning Bolt!”

Sungjin tumbled away.

‘Boom’

He accidentally held the ‘Moon Specter’ too close to the strike zone, and his right arm went numb. Sungjin gritted his teeth against the pain, pointing towards the Crocodile with his left hand, he shouted an incantation.

“Awaken and become my slave! Rise of the Dead!”

The Crocodile came back alive and began to move. At the same time, Sungjin took out and rang ‘Manyata – Master’s bell’.*

‘Ring ring’

Along with the sound, the Crocodile began to move rapidly. Sungjin’s attempt was successful. Under the effect of Manyata, the Crocodile zombie moved with incredible dexterity.

“Discard your fangs and become a tame sheep! Polymorph!”

Even though it was instantly countered before it could launch even a single attack, it gave him the time he needed. Sungjin opened the book.

The book was designed to automatically open to the most relevant page. Once the book was open, Sungjin read out loud the

content of the book. Quickly, and accurately.

“Cao Cao’s great army pursued deep into the night and reached the fields of Changban. But he stared down at the army while blocking the bridge. Shaking his lance and glaring most threateningly, he shouted.”

Translator's Notes:

[1\]](#) The name Soldamyr is a parody on one of ‘Heroes of Might and Magic’ hero Solmyr, the djinn Wizard

Master’s bell is kind of a pun. The Word for bell 종 could also mean slave/servant.

Chapter 040 – Kutan Desert (7)

“I am Zhang Yide!”

Sungjin enunciated and pronounced each and every word carefully until the end. The book closed itself and flew into his arms. This was proof that the ‘Declamation’ had successfully activated. The Operator gave out an announcement.

[Seance of Zhang Fei Yide activated!]

The books always arm the user with the perfect skill for the circumstance. Sungjin grasped the ‘Moon Specter’ and charged towards the Genie immediately.

[Passive skill – Enhance Attack(III), Swift(III) applied.]

Sungjin didn’t pay attention to the Operator’s announcements, but he felt his size increase and his movements speed up.

“Baa~”

Soldamyr, who was busy turning the Crocodile into a sheep returned his attention back onto Sungjin, who was rushing towards him.

Sungjin was moving even faster than before; the same guy who could, even in normal conditions, dodge bolts of lightning. Soldamyr decided to turn him into a sheep as well. He began to recite the incantation rapidly.

“Discard your fangs and”

However, Sungjin heard the Operator’s voice while charging towards the Genie.

[Active Skill Shout of Changban(I) is available for instant cast]

Sungjin did not know what Shout of Changban was but

“ become a tame sheep!”

He didn’t have time to think it through. The spell was nearly complete. Sungjin wasted no time activating the skill.

“Shout of Changban!”

His mouth moved on its own after,

“COME AND BATTLE ME TO THE DEATH!”

A voice loud enough to tremble the earth burst forth. Following the superhuman bellow, the Genie was unable to continue the incantation.

Sungjin didn't know for sure, but it seemed to have a spell cancellation effect. Soldamyr attempted to stop Sungjin using his hands, but Sungjin easily cut away the fingers.

Sungjin leapt up to his arm and began carving up the Genie's body.

Without magic, the Mage 'Soldamyr' was unable to put up resistance to Sungjin's blade properly; he severely lacked in physical offense or defense.

[Effects of Seance over in 10, 9]

The operator began a countdown but

[8, 7]

When about 7 seconds were left, the Genie's body suddenly turned into smoke along with a 'pop' and was sucked back into the lamp. Left alone mid-air, Sungjin spun around in the air a few

times and landed on the sand safely.

The Operator's cube announced his victory soon after.

[Hidden boss Great Genie]

[Soldamyr Cleared!]

Sungjin returned the Moon Specter to the sheath. And then let out a sigh of relief.

“Whew~”

But then

‘Grr’

The zombie Crocodile came running towards him after the polymorph spell ended.

“Oh my goodness”

Sungjin was surprised by the Crocodile twice now. He had forgotten that he had reanimated the Corpse using his magic.

“Grr”

The Crocodile orbited Sungjin as if searching for something to attack.

“Whoa, whoa, Ok I got it, it’s over. Return.”

Responding to Sungjin’s gestures, the Crocodile returned to being a corpse. Finishing the combat, Sungjin opened the Magic waterskin and poured the water onto his head.

“Ha..”

It was not an easy combat. ‘Soldamyr’ lived up to his name as the greatest mage in Kutan’s history; his spells were incredibly

powerful.

Without “Romance of the Three Kingdoms’ and Seance of ‘Zhang Fei’, it would have been an extremely difficult and drawn out fight. Sungjin asked the Operator out of curiosity.

“Operator, what’s the actual effect of ‘Shout of Changban’ active skill?”

The Operator opened up an information screen.

Active Skill – Shout of Changban

Innate skill of Seance of ‘Zhang Fei’

Make a thunderous shout

All things within a 300-meter radius, including the caster,

Are unable to cast abilities for 10 seconds

This was most definitely a ‘hard counter’ for any mage character. The true strength of the book was not just from the spell effects, but the fact that it picks the spell based on the situation; the book would call forth the perfect hero from the story using Seance.

‘When I have to face other Mages... I might see it again.’

Sungjin organized his thoughts as he corked the waterskin and returned it to his belt. Now that he took a look at himself, he saw that a portion of his clothes had been burnt off.

It probably happened while he was dodging the bolts of lightning. Sungjin spoke to himself absentmindedly.

“This is probably the first time I lost so much HP... right, Operator?”

The Operator responded even to his ramblings.

[This is correct. You have lost a total of 4724 HP. This is the highest recorded HP you have lost so far.]

Sungjin's HP was approaching 20,000, but for 'normal hunters', taking 4724 was nearly lethal.

'I didn't even take a single hit straight on... what an amazing power.'

Sungjin thought as he stretched himself. After the Genie had disappeared, all that was left was the intense rays of the sun. He couldn't help but think of the cool balcony of Ninety Nine Nights.

'When I go back this time... I should have chilled noodles. Yes... Chilled. And Sherbet ice cream for dessert....hmm, I wonder if there are still mobs left. It's not going to start handing out raid reward yet, is it?' *

Sungjin turned to the Operator.

"Operator, is there any hidden elements left? If there is, please activate Treasure Hunter now."

[There are no more hidden elements left in this chapter.]

It must be because the 'hidden place' held the secret boss, rather than an item.

‘Hmm... I see...’

Sungjin nodded to himself as he was thinking, but the Operator continued to speak.

[Raid 100% complete.]

Sungjin looked at the cube in surprise.

‘What?’

The other hunters must have finished hunting the rest of the monsters. Sungjin celebrated internally.

‘That’s great! Let’s get the rewards and go home.’

But the Operator wasn’t done.

[However, there is an active ‘Troll’ in the party.]

[Raid reward will be postponed until the troll, or the other members are eliminated]

[or if the timer runs out.]

“Hmm?”

Sungjin stared at the cube.

“Troll?”

Something must have happened between the other four Hunters. Sungjin gazed into the distance. Tanned sand continued endlessly towards the horizon.

Just roaming the desert was torture, but trying to find the troll hiding in the middle of this vast desert within the time limit was nothing short of impossible. Sungjin considered his options.

‘What should I do?’

But it was at that moment

‘Whoosh woosh woosh woosh’

He heard something from behind.

*

While Igor was running towards the Oasis, the Operator gave out an announcement.

[Warning! Hidden boss]

[The Great Genie 'Soldamyr' has appeared!]

Igor turned to look at the cube with the corner of his eyes.

'Hidden boss? There are hidden bosses?'

It only took him a moment to accept it, since he could visually confirm the existence of the hidden boss from afar. Seeing the form of the giant hovering over the oasis, he was certain

'The secret behind the missing 5%... that must be it.'

Not too long after, Igor was able to reach the Oasis. The battle had already started by the time he arrived.

"Incinerate everything in your Path! Fireball!"

Igor hid himself behind a dune and watched the fight. The 'Hidden boss' Genie wielded unbelievably powerful magic.

It was incomparably stronger than the mage bosses of the past, such as the Lich or the Two-headed Ogre. Igor quickly calculated in his head.

The Teenager currently had 73.6% of the total contribution. If he

gets killed by the Genie, Igor would get all of it automatically. Problem was

“Solidify!”

The Teenager skill was also incredible, being able to face off against the Genie alone on equal terms. Igor theorized three outcomes.

First, if the teenager is killed, he would leave the Oasis before the Genie discovers him. The Genie was probably an extremely dangerous foe.

Two, if the Teenager wins without much problem, he would, again, leave the Oasis. No matter how he thought of it, the teenager’s skills were above his own. He didn’t forget the fact that he, as a troll, could be killed by others without any penalty.

Three, in case the fight was close and the teenager pulls off a narrow victory... Igor looked down at his sword and shield.

‘If that’s the case, I will finish it myself.’

He was already in the ‘troll state’. There was nothing to lose by putting more blood on his hands. Planning his next move carefully, Igor slowly made his way into the tall grass of the Oasis and hid himself.

He was confident in camouflage and ambush. He was confident

that he could avoid detection without a camo suit.

Hiding in the bush, he watched the fight. The Genie appeared to have the upper hand.

“Lance which pierces all! Lightning Bolt!”

The teenager seemed unable to deal with the Genie’s rapid spell attacks properly. But the tables turned suddenly.

“I am Zhang Yide!”

It was after the Teenager read out of a book. An ancient Chinese warrior appeared and hovered behind him like a guardian spirit.

And the Teenager dashed forward, even faster than before. Igor thought

‘Is it... some sort of buff spell?’

But the book effects did not stop there. Opening his mouth, suddenly the Teenager bellowed.

**“COME AND BATTLE ME TO THE
DEATH!!!!!!”**

It was an unbelievable shout, done in unison with the guardian spirit behind him. From the moment he bellowed, the Giant from the lamp became mute, unable to cast any spell, unable to put up a fight.

And finally, the Giant turned back into smoke and disappeared. Once the battle was over, Igor inspected the teenager.

Because the fight had just gotten over, the teenager seemed unaware of Igor. Igor had to make a decision now.

‘Two, if the Teenager wins without much problem, he would leave the Oasis.’

‘Three, in case the fight was close and the teenager pulls off a narrow victory.’

Igor was trying to decide if it was case two or three, but he heard the Chinese Teenager talk to himself.

“This is probably the first time I lost so much HP... right, Operator?”

And the Operator answered his question.

[This is correct. You have lost a total of 4724 HP. This is the highest recorded HP you have lost so far.]

Igor quickly considered his options. He had monopolized all the points from the very start.

‘I don’t know how he obtained such powerful items... but there should be little if any difference in stats’

Considering stat allocation needed for Strength, Dexterity, and Endurance, 4724 is not a small amount of HP to lose. Even more so considering the Teenage was also using magic.

‘His total HP should be about 10,000... no, it’s most likely less than that.’

The Lightning spell attack from earlier must have dealt a great amount of damage. Igor made up his mind and looked down at his shield. That Chinese teenager was without a doubt stronger than himself.

But if he was below half health, or farther below that then Igor stood a chance. Especially if he took the first strike in an ambush. It was then,

[Raid 100% complete.]

[However, there is an active ‘Troll’ in the party.]

The Operator gave an announcement.

‘Troll?’

The Chinese Teenager came to find out about him. At this moment, Igor decided.

‘If I don’t get stronger now, I will die later.’

He immediately threw his round shield.

‘Whoosh woosh woosh’

He drew his sword and charged towards the teen.

Note : Battle of Changban Historical background:

The Battle of Changban was a battle fought by warlords Cao Cao and Liu Bei in 208 in the late Eastern Han dynasty. Three legends spawned in this battle.

Liu Bei was in a retreat, running away south. After finally convincing the master strategist Zhuge Liang after what is known as the Three Visitations 三顧草廬 삼고초려. Soon after accepting Zhuge Liang’s Longzhong plan (long term strategy to attack and capture the Imperial Capital), Liu Biao (who had been protecting Liu Bei from Cao Cao) died and was succeeded by Liu Cong, who immediately surrendered to Cao Cao without telling Liu Bei. This is why by the time Liu Bei found out and began the retreat, Cao

Cao's gigantic army was already marching upon his city.

Loved by the people, the people decided to follow him, and the peasants initiated a voluntary exodus to follow their lord, with their numbers as high as several hundred thousands. This is the first legend of Battle of Changban.

Cao Cao at the time commanded the Mongolian Cavalry division and rode hard day and night to catch up with Liu Bei. Liu Bei, moving slowly with hundreds of thousands of peasants which included elderly and children, could not move fast enough, and eventually they were caught. This is the Battle of Changban. During this battle, most of Liu Bei's followers were caught, killed, or vowed loyalty to Cao Cao. Most of Liu Bei's family was captured by Cao Cao, to which one of his heroic generals, Zhao Yun, charged head on against the gigantic armies of Cao Cao. Liu Bei's men shouted that Zhao Yun has abandoned his lord, to which Liu Bei refused to believe it. Lo and Behold, from within the middle of the Cao Cao forces, Zhao Yun returned with the infant son (Liu Bei's Heir) and Liu Bei's main wife, rescued from captivity. This is the second legend of Battle of Changban. According to legend, Liu Bei throws away his son and cast him to the ground, angry that because of the infant son he almost got a great general and a hero killed and Liu Bei's other wives suicided by throwing themselves into the well so that they don't burden Zhao Yun by having to protect them all.

During the retreat, Zhang Fei (the sworn brother) of Liu Bei decided to form a rearguard with 20 cavalymen, blocking the main bridge across the River to buy Liu Bei and the final few surviving followers to escape from the battle. Zhang Fei is a legendary warrior himself. And he alone, with just 20 men, were

able to block the bridge and defend against the entire might of the Cao Cao army until Liu Bei could escape. After killing dozens of enemies, including several generals, He made the legendary shout “I am Zhang Yide! Come battle me to the death!” to which Cao Cao’s army’s morale broke and no longer dared to fight him. The great army of Cao Cao retreated. Left alone, he and the men destroyed the bridge and retreated to Liu Bei’s camp. The passage that Sungjin read out loud is actually from the real ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’ where it describes Zhang Fei’s legendary defense of the bridge.

Chapter 041 – Kutan Desert (8)

Sungjin turned. A round Shield was flying towards his neck. He quickly tilted his head.

‘Woosh’

A violently spinning bladed shield flew past him. Meanwhile,

“Uwooo!”

‘Gladiator Igor’ came running towards him with his sword drawn.

“Haa!”

Igor swung his blade. He was quite fast, but it was nowhere near fast enough for Sungjin. Sungjin drew his katana and easily parried the strike. But from behind him

‘Sssh’

He could hear the Shield returning. Igor prepared for another attack, a front to back pincer strike. Sungjin opened his eyes wide.

‘Is this is what he was aiming for?’

Sael's Breath was still under cooldown. Sungjin removed his left hand from the sword and parried Igor's attack with 'Moon Specter' held only by his right hand, and blocked the Shield with 'Free Ark' on his left.

'Bang! Clang!'

Four metallic objects collided at the same time. Sungjin thought that he had deflected the shield away with his wrist, but

"Haa!"

When Igor reached out with his arms, the Shield returned to his hands. Since he didn't shout an incantation, it wasn't magic. It was most likely a skill built into the Shield as an innate ability.

Sungjin shook his left arm which had numbed and gazed at the shield.

'A ranged self-returning shield...'

He knew from the very first moment when he laid his eyes on Igor that this man was strong. He could tell with how fast Igor was able to move. Sungjin had no idea how he managed to scrape together so many stat points, but his dexterity was extremely high.

And that strange shield... it couldn't be anything less than a heroic level item. Which meant, Igor was likely concealing other high-rank items that Sungjin didn't know about.

Sungjin quickly returned the 'Moon Specter' back into the sheath. He was preparing to use 'Deathly Wail'. Since he had tested the effects against the Rapist, Sungjin knew that the 'Deathly Wail' was extremely useful in duels against other people.

Sungjin kept the 'Moon Spectre' on standby as he asked Igor a question.

“So... is this the way you have chosen to become stronger? Backstabbing your teammates?”

Igor nodded.

“It's simple math, isn't it? Giving up just 10%, and taking the other 90%. In some ways, isn't this just like how the world works? Competing over limited resources? This game is structured this way; work together until you clear the raid, and then”

Igor drew his finger over his neck.

“Kill. Take the contribution points by force. This is a far more profitable outcome. I realized this from the very start. And I acted upon it. I have monopolized each and every point from every raid.”

‘Monopolized each and every point...’

Igor's strength made sense. Even if he hadn't found a single

hidden element of the raids, he still had access to a considerable amount of stats and coins using this method. Sungjin replied.

“Yes... You’re not technically wrong. But you will never know how it is to receive 100% contribution points.”

Sungjin was done speaking. There was nothing more that needed to be said. Putting his hand on the hilt of the ‘Moon Specter’, Sungjin charged towards Igor. Igor threw his shield one more time.

‘Whoosh woosh woosh woosh’

Sungjin did not fear the shield that he could plainly see flying towards him. Sungjin lightly dodged the Shield. It will eventually return, but probably not in time.

Because Sungjin finally drew his blade.

“Deathly. Wail.”

Along with Sungjin’s commands

“KYAAAAA!!!”

An unearthly screech reverberated and filled the air. It was such a horrifying sound that even the hair on the back of Sungjin’s neck stood up.

Igor did not retreat or run away, but he did take few steps backwards.

‘It’s over’

Sungjin thought, swinging his blade as he dashed forward. But

“Cleanse.”

Igor shouted.

‘Clang’

Igor picked up his sword and parried Sungjin’s strike.

“What?”

Sungjin was surprised.

‘He instantly countered ‘Deathly Wail’!’

Sungjin saw a necklace shine on Igor’s neck. It must have had a similar effect as the ‘Free Ark’. While Sungjin was shocked, Igor made his move.

“Haa!”

With his gesture

‘Whooosh’

Sungjin could hear the shield begin to return. He could be attacked from both sides shortly. Sungjin tumbled off to the side and decided to dodge the shield for now.

The Shield returned to Igor’s hands. Sungjin stared at him. He was no easy foe.

Sungjin considered his options. But the only thing he had was ‘2nd circle magic’ and ‘Yanhurat’.

‘If I use Yanhurat here... I’ll eventually become addicted to its effects. I’ll start with magic first.’

But now that he thought of it, he had another option. He immediately acted on it.

“Operator, give me Manta.”

The long staff ‘Manta’ emerged from the Cube and flew at him. Sungjin grabbed the staff and held it in his left arm.

“Swordsman... suddenly equips a staff? And in the off hand? Trying to use magic?”

Igor dashed forward this time.

“You won’t get a chance!”

‘Magic... ok, you’ll see.’

Sungjin watched him come, and he swung his sword and staff together.

He intentionally aimed at two different spots, and timed his strike to hit simultaneously. Igor had to block the ‘Moon Specter’ with his shield and the Manta with his sword. But that was only for a moment.

‘Woosh’

‘Voom’

Sungjin began a rapid combination of attacks utilizing weapons in both hands. Igor was unable to do anything but defend.

‘How...’

He couldn’t understand how this was possible; Using two very different weapons in a dual wield and be able to use them effectively in combat.

Most dual wielders often attacked with their primary hand and defended with their off hand.

Igor had observed many instructors fight with various weapons, from east to west. But not even the Grandmasters of their various weapons could pull off such a feat.

Astonished and pushed back by Sungjin's vicious attacks, he decided to finally use his ace in the hole.

“Haa!”

He threw the Shield towards Sungjin at close range. Sungjin had already easily dodged the shield before, and dodging it from close range was just as simple.

But using this as a chance, Igor turned and hastily retreated.

‘So... he chooses to escape.’

He wouldn't be able to go far. Sungjin's Swift Paw was already off cooldown. And, he had Magical Spells available to him.

“Binding Frost! Frostbite!”

Igor's feet froze in place. Igor could no longer run. Igor even threw his sword in a last-ditch effort to make a stand.

‘Woosh’

There was no way Sungjin couldn’t be able to dodge the sword.

‘So he abandons his only weapon. Looks like he’s given up.’

Sungjin calmly walked up to him. But, Igor spread his arms wide and shouted

“Haa!”

It was now that Sungjin noticed his gloves. At the center, the gloves had what appeared to be a circular opening. It was now that he realized.

‘It wasn’t the Shield!’

He quickly turned around.

‘Woosh’

‘Shing’

The Shield and the Sword were both flying towards him. If he only had Moon Specter, it could have been a dangerous moment. But, he also had Manta in his other hand.

‘Ching!’

‘Clang!’

The Sword and Shield made loud noises upon contact and were deflected off, returning to Igor’s hands.

‘...I can’t let him buy any more time.’

Sungjin charged towards Igor. He was still unable to move due to the frost. Sungjin resumed rapidly attacking Igor with both of his weapons. Finally, Sungjin managed to knock the sword out of his hands.

‘Clang!’

“Haa!”

Igor attempted to call the sword back to him, but he got distracted from blocking with his shield for a split second. It was the slightest of crack in his defense, but that was sufficient.

Sungjin thrust his sword to the right of the shield, between Igor’s body and the shield, and cut off Igor’s shield arm. Igor, having lost his arm, took a few steps back. Despite losing his arm, he didn’t cry out in pain.

‘What a monster.’

But no matter what, his arm was permanently lost; it would not return like his sword and shield. Sungjin first swung the Manta and followed up quickly with the Moon Specter.

Igor parried the Manta but had his sword arm cut off in the process. He was completely disarmed.

“Umph...”

He finally let out a groan. Rather than responding to bodily pain, it seemed to be a response to having been defeated. Sungjin approached the unarmed Igor.

He was a far stronger opponent than he had first thought. His stats were superb, but even more amazing was his ironclad will which could endure the pain of having limbs chopped off, and the clever ways he fought and laid traps.

Before finishing him off, Sungjin couldn't help but whisper.

“If only you weren't a troll... you would have made a great ally.”

Igor heard him and replied.

“Kill me. I accept that you are stronger than me, and I will not beg for my life.”

Sungjin stared at him. Unlike the Rapist, he was no coward. Sungjin lifted the sword above his head. But before he took the final blow, Igor added one more thing.

“Kill me, and continue forward. Survive to the end and save us from our imprisonment. Please, bring salvation to mankind.”

Sungjin couldn't help but freeze in place. Igor must have figured out how the 'Raids' would proceed. And as if he was in his final confessions, he continued.

“I was trained by the Spetsnaz. Even if my methods were violent, I had firmly believed that I must do anything, including monopolizing all the points through murder, to rise to the top. But not even in my dreams could I have imagined I could run into someone as strong as you.”

Finally, his face relaxed, as if he was prepared to face death.

“Back in the Hunter's Hall, I saw the image of my beloved, my parents, all caged within the Purgatory. You are capable of bringing it all to an end, right? Please, make it stop. With your own hands, please rescue us from this hell. And finally, save us. All of us.”

Igor begged Sungjin. But he was begging Sungjin not to spare him, but to kill him.

Sungjin hesitated for a moment, but he swung his blade and fulfilled his final wishes. Standing respectfully in front of the corpse before him, Sungjin whispered.

“I have accepted your last wishes. Must be nice... to be able to push off your responsibilities to someone else...”

Sungjin wanted to cry. But the dry desert wind blew against his face and dried up whatever tears that would have formed.

Sungjin gazed up. The burning Sun hung in the sky. This dry accursed desert didn't even allow tears to drop. The Operator made a cheerful announcement without caring about what Sungjin was feeling at the moment.

[All 'Trolls' in the party have been eliminated.]

[And now]

Sungjin used every fiber of his being to swing the 'Moon Specter' and attacked the Cube.

‘Bang!’

It let out a loud noise, but not a scratch formed on the Cube.

The Operator continued to speak, ignoring him.

[Distributing Raid reward]

Chapter 042 – Kutan Desert (9)

[Monsters Slain. Giant Lizard: 40. Giant Scorpion: 20. Sandworm: 10. Total 4000 points.]

[Boss Monster Slain: Basilisk: 600 points.]

[Hidden Boss ‘Great Mage Soldamyr’: 600 points.]

[Final point count: 5200 Points. Distributing points.]

Reward calculations ended quickly this time since there was only one recipient.

[Your contribution is 100.0%. 5200 Stat points, 5200 Black Coins awarded. Raid Clear Bonus 1500 Stat points and 1500 Black Coins awarded. Item effect ‘Additional 10% gained’ activated. Distributing 6700 Stat points and 7370 Black Coins.]

An incredible amount of points and coins were awarded to Sungjin, but he didn’t feel all that happy.

[And now we will distribute the items.]

[Soldamyr – Sealed Great Magician]

[Bayram – Basilisk’s Eye]

[Al Zard – Magic Carpet]

[Recovery Potion – Medium x4]

[Spell Book – Chain Lightning]

[Spell Book – Polymorph]

The Distribution finished, and the Operator cheerfully congratulated Sungjin.

[Congratulations! You have obtained the Legendary item ‘Soldamyr – Sealed Great Magician’!]

Sungjin got down to pick up the items that fell in a heap in front of him. The first item he picked up was obviously the golden ‘Legendary’ Lamp.

The appearance of the lamp was identical to the worn out lamp he had rubbed earlier, but it was now clean without a single smudge or blemish. It almost seemed to radiate with a golden aura.

While Sungjin was lost in the golden exterior of the lavish ‘Legendary’ lamp, the Operator continued to speak.

[Last but not the least, you will be awarded titles you’ve earned on this raid.]

[Inquisition – When hit by spells cast by others, gain 10%

increase in speed and damage.]

[No stacking limit]

Sungjin glanced at the Cube. It was a familiar title. Many hunters had kept this one active due to how powerful this title was.

The Operator must have awarded him the title due to being hit a few times by Soldamyr's spells. Sungjin wanted to check the items he had received, but another object popped out of the Cube.

[Title 'Adjudicator' activated.]

[You obtained 'Telkron – Jester's Gloves'.]

'Uh...'

Sungjin picked up the item that had just dropped. It looked like an ordinary pair of leather glove. Except for the fact that there was a strange circle drawn at the center of it.

When Sungjin peaked at Igor's corpse, the gloves were missing from his hands. Turning his attention back to the gloves, he checked the details.

Telkron – Jester's Gloves

Heroic Glove – Defense 12%

Active skill

Pa – Throw the weapon or shield in hand.

Haa – Thrown weapons return to the hand it was thrown from.

The weapon's flying speed scales off of the total weapon damage dealt. Cooldown 20 seconds.

The Previous owner, who had been relying on the gloves rather than his own skill, was chased out of the circus when he had lost it.

‘As I thought... this glove was the cause.’

The defense rating was fairly low; it was mainly an offensive type item. Sungjin had no gloves, so he immediately equipped it.

“Equip.”

The leather gloves covered his hands, and they felt good. Sungjin lifted up the ‘Moon Specter’ and said

“Pa”

Despite not having thrown the weapon, the ‘Moon Specter’ flew

out of his hands at great speeds. Once it reached a certain distance, Sungjin said

“Haa”

The Moon Specter spun rapidly in midair for a second before turning around and eventually returning to his hands.

‘Hmm... It’s nice...’

Igor had used this item with very high proficiency. All Sungjin had to do now was practice and get better at using it. Doing so would significantly improve the range of actions he could take with his weapons.

‘I’ll need to practice it as soon as I can.’

Making a mental note to himself, Sungjin returned the Moon Specter to its sheath. The next item he wanted to inspect was the ‘Legendary’ Lamp. Sungjin lifted it up for inspection.

Soldamyr – Sealed Great Magician

Legendary Summon

Active Skill

Spiritual Link (Soldamyr) – Loyal Familiar, Summon Soldamyr.

If Summon is killed, or if 10 minutes pass from the time of summoning, it disappears.

Soldamyr, once strongest Magician to have ever lived in Kutan,
sealed himself into the lamp in exchange for eternal life.

Sungjin rubbed the lamp. The bluish cloud billowed out of the lamp and formed the shape of a man. It was large but far smaller than earlier.

It was only about twice the height of a normal adult male. Once the form stabilized, it began to speak.

“Greetings. I am Soldamyr, and I humbly apologize for my earlier behavior. Since you have overcome my test, I formally acknowledge you as my new master.”

They had only just finished crossing blades, and yet the Genie

was very polite.

“Nice to meet you. So, how will you help me? If you don’t mind me asking”

‘Murderous thunder, Jump from foe to foe! Chain Lightning!’

He shouted out a magic incantation. Then, he explained himself.

“If you summon me, I shall cast appropriate magic on your behalf. Of course, within the limit of my Mana supply.”

“Cast magic... on my behalf?”

“Yes. Of Blue, Red, Green, White and Black Magic types, I can cast any spell within Blue, Red and Black magic type under the seventh circle.”

Sungjin tilted his head. He knew that Kutan referred to the desert, but he didn’t know the history of the land very well.

“So the strongest mage to have ever lived in Kutan... can only cast three of the five schools of magic, and can only cast up to the seventh circle? And you also have mana restrictions?”

“Ah... I had voluntarily sealed myself in the lamp. Thanks to the extension of my life, I was able to spend an eternity studying and researching various forms of magic... But in return, my abilities

have greatly diminished. I hope you can understand.”

While Sungjin was feeling deeply disappointed, Soldamyr crossed his arms and reflected over his past.

“Before I was sealed, I was often compared to two legendary magicians who came before me... the great Dark Flame Mage,”

Using his finger and with the help of magic, he created an illusion of two men. Sungjin didn't know who they were, but Soldamyr continued with his explanations.

“And the only magician to have attained perfection, the Blue Sky Mage. I have been judged to be the closest one to crack the last inner circle since the ‘Blue Sky Mage’. If I had not sealed myself, I might have been able to obtain the tenth circle, the ‘Circle of Perfection’.”

He kept spouting nonsense. The Genie seemed to be starved for conversation after being imprisoned in the lamp for so long.

“Ok... got it. Well, see you next time then.”

“Understood. If you have any question about magic, please don't forget to consult me. I may have less magic power and mana compared to before, but my knowledge has grown by leaps and bounds.”

“... Sure. Unsummon.”

Instantly the Genie turned into a puff of smoke and got sucked into the lamp. Since he could cast spells on Sungjin's behalf, he could prove to be useful. The next item to inspect was a necklace with a yellow eye as an ornament.

Bayram – Basilisk's Eye

Heroic Necklace

Active Skill

Snake Eye(III) – Paralyze enemies for 3 seconds. Cooldown 10 minutes.

Giant Lizard Basilisk's eye.

He who gazes into this eye momentarily experiences nightmares.

Sungjin recalled the moment when he had looked into the real Basilisk's eye. He was able to free himself using 'Free Ark', but he did get paralyzed for a moment.

He understood its effects after experiencing it for himself, and so now all he had to do was find the right time to use it. The last item he received was a carpet all rolled up.

Al Zard – Magic Carpet

Active Skill

Flight(III) – Can fly for 20 minutes. Cooldown 1 hour.

Far far away in the middle of the desert, a wondrous place

A place where anyone would want to go at least once.

‘That explanation seems familiar for some reason...’

Sungjin spread open the Carpet and took a look at it. It was a little small. It was just large enough to accommodate two adults sitting on top of it.

Sungjin sat upon it and tested the carpet.

“Flight”

The Carpet began to float up away from the ground. Sungjin sat for a moment pondering

‘...how do I drive this?’

He looked over to the large Palm Tree at the Oasis.

‘I want to go over there...’

The Carpet flew up rapidly and brought him over to the Palm tree.

“Oooh”

Sungjin had been planning on buying ‘Flight’ after this chapter and memorizing the spell, but with this carpet, it wasn’t immediately necessary.

It also didn’t cost any mana or anything; there were no demerits to using it to get around. Sungjin flew higher riding the magic carpet. He heard the Operator speak from the cube following him from behind.

[You will return to the Hunter’s Hall in 10 seconds. 10, 9, 8]

Sungjin continued to fly around the Kutan desert while ignoring her. She continued her countdown.

[3, 2, 1, 0]

Her countdown completed, and Sungjin disappeared from midair.

*

“Haa... Haa..”

The black cop Baltren looked around. He could see nothing but the desert as far as his eyes could see.

‘Did I lose them?’

He was running in the desert, sweating like a fountain. He wiped his sweat off his face as he whispered.

“Crazy...bastards...”

It had looked like this chapter was going to end safely. Everyone had worked together and coordinated in killing the Basilisk; Everything was going smoothly.

Although one of the hunters died during the hunt after, the raid had gone well overall. But the problem arose when someone decided to ask

“What is my Contribution?”

It turned out that the person on the team with the highest contribution was Baltren.

Baltren had thought that it was due to the fact that he had effectively tanked for the team and protected the others. But, one of the hunters expressed displeasure.

‘Why am I getting so little?’

And so the teammates started ‘blaming others’ and ‘arguing’. Before anything could be done, they began drawing blood, fighting each other.

And they even attacked Baltren who was standing by the side. The reason?

‘Because he had the most’

If he had not used the item from the last raid ‘Manmu – Pach’s Club’ to make the other hunters faint, he would have been forced to fight for his life.

‘Troll... how did this happen...’

He was a cop, but there was no law to defend here. He kept his watchful eye on the surroundings. Eventually, the Operator gave an announcement.



[You will return to the Hunter's Hall in 10 Seconds]

He took a deep sigh of relief. He had never been so happy to hear the announcement.

Finally, being chased by people who were even worse than monsters was over.

Chapter 043 – Black Market Fifth Shopping

Sungjin sat on the floor with his legs crossed, still holding onto his sword.

The place he was sitting was the ‘Hunter’s Hall. It was an unimaginably immense Hall lined endlessly with pillars.

Shortly, along with a ‘shooo’ sound, other Hunters were teleported to the same place. Sungjin looked up at the others. Everyone was drenched in sweat and covered in sand.

Once the crowd of hunters grew large enough, the Operator’s face showed up as a hologram above the pillars.

[Congratulations!]

[The hunters gathered here have all successfully cleared five chapters thus far.]

Not many were happy despite her announcement. The hunters were fighting and struggling for their lives until just a moment ago.

[The current number of surviving Hunters is 637,024.]

[The raid began with a total of 7,310,067,613 Hunters.]

[Less than 1 out of 10,000 of the original is remaining.]

Sungjin tried to recall the past. He did remember that once the ‘Kutan Desert’ was cleared the Operator gave an announcement about the total number of surviving Hunters, but he couldn’t recall the exact amount.

‘Well based on luck, I bet it would fluctuate greatly...’

While Sungjin was lost in thought, the Operator continued to speak.

[Everyone present here is part of the top 0.01% of the rankings.]

[You have all proven your own self-worth.]

Sungjin briefly thought of “Serin Han” and ‘Igor’. He also remembered the ‘Coward’ from the first chapter. It was possible that he had survived until now... although the chances were extremely slim.

[Please continue to grow and become stronger]

[And clear all the raids.]

Briefly, the Operator disappeared and was replaced by an image

of people. Sungjin decided to look away and observe other people's faces.

Everyone had deep frowns and angry faces; they were most likely being shown images of their friends and families.

[To remind you]

[Once the final raid is beaten,]

[Everyone trapped in the Purgatory will be revived.]

Someone muttered under their breath.

“Fuck... How are we supposed to believe that?”

Someone else commented

“They’re holding everyone hostage... this is basically an extortion!”

But

[Starting from this chapter onward, at the center of the Black Market]

Despite grumbling just a second ago, once the Operator began an announcement, the hunters stopped speaking immediately; The Operator's words were absolute when it came to survival in the Raids.

[A new area will appear.]

[It is very useful in increasing your chances of survival, so I would recommend visiting it at least once.]

[You will be sent to the Black Market in 10 seconds.]

Sungjin could hear people murmur around him.

“New area? What’s that?”

“It’s probably useless without using tons of coins.”

Sungjin couldn’t help but think

‘You don’t need it at all!’

[3, 2, 1, 0.]

Along with the countdown, the people gathered in the Hunter's Hall were scattered to their own instances of the Black Market.

*

Sungjin immediately began walking once he arrived. His destination was one and only; Kenneth's Katana shop. Once Sungjin was close, he asked the Operator for the amount of Coins he carried.

‘Operator, How many Coins do I have?’

[You have 12550 Coins.]

Sungjin nodded and then entered the shop. And as always, Kenneth welcomed him inside.

“Welcome back, Mister Hunter.”

“Hey Kenneth, sorry but... Can I... See the Blood Vengeance again?”

This was already the third time. Kenneth smiled brightly and replied.

“Of course you can, don’t be sorry.”

And for the third time, Kenneth brought Blood Vengeance to Sungjin. Sungjin held the sword in his hands. Then, he held the Moon Specter in the right and Blood Vengeance in the left and tried swinging the sword with the sheath on. The swords smoothly sailed through the air.

“Sssh Sssh”

Kenneth hissed while clapping.

“I have seen a multitude of customers wield a sword... but it’s the first time I’ve seen anyone handle two swords so proficiently.”

Sungjin was also very happy with himself. The Moon Specter and the Blood Vengeance; he was now able to field both swords simultaneously. With these two swords, he wouldn’t need to purchase any other weapon.

Sungjin lifted up the Blood Vengeance and said

“Please let me buy this. Operator, pay.”

The Cube came forward and completed the transaction. Kenneth bowed and thanked Sungjin.

“9700 Coins received for one Blood Vengeance. Thank you for your business.”

To her sincere and polite gesture, Sungjin replied in kind by also bowing his head.

“Thank you as well. Then, take care.

Sungjin hung the Blood Vengeance on his belt. He had finally become a Dual Wield Swordsman.

Sungjin was going to go straight back to the ‘Ninety Nine Nights’, but he thought of something.

‘Ah... That’s right.’

At the newly created area, there was a business he had to attend to. Sungjin passed many shops to make his way to the center of the Market.

In a previously empty lot, a circular stall had sprung up which was run by three pig demi-humans.

“Do you have anything you wish to sell?”

“Or is there something you’d like to buy?”

“Whichever it is, please come!”

Sungjin walked over. The Operator began her explanation.

[This is the ‘Achi’ Brother’s “Time is money plan”]

[Hunters can put up items for auction at this shop, which could then be purchased by other Hunters.]

Sungjin walked up to the smallest of the three pig brothers. And then

“Operator, give me Manta.”

Receiving Manta from the cube, Sungjin handed over the staff to the pig man.

“Please put this up for auction.”

The Pigman replied

“Oh, this is a Heroic Tier item. The Minimum payout for Heroic Tier items is 2000 coins. If someone makes a bid for the item, the item will remain available until sundown for another bid.”

“I know. Start the auction price at 3000 and set the instant buyout at 6000 coins.”

Sungjin knew the general prices of items thanks to his experience.

Rare was between 500 5000, Heroic between 2000 5000 and Legendary was between 5000 ~ 50,000.

[Unique Legendary items](#) were priceless, but they were typically unavailable due to the advantage they offered in the raid.

Just like how Sungjin had no intentions to auction ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’.

“Understood.”

The Pigman took the item and placed it inside a larger cube at the center of their shop.

“If it gets sold, we will send the earnings to Ninety Nine Nights.”

Sungjin nodded. To be honest, items with magic enhancements like ‘Manta’ weren’t likely to be sold. It was because most hunters were not ready to fight exclusively with magic until after chapter 7 or 8.

But as long as he kept the item available in the shop, someone was bound to buy it. The item itself was not bad at all. Another Pig demi-human approached Sungjin.

“Anything you would like to buy?”

Sungjin shook his head, but he thought he might as well ask.

“Well... Any Legendary Tier items available for sale?”

“There are... no legendary items for sale currently.”

Just as he thought. It was too early for Legendary items to be in the surplus. Since Sungjin had no interest in anything less than a Legendary tier item, he left the market without worry.

“Ok, I’ll have to check back in another time.”

Sungjin immediately headed off to Ninety Nine Nights. He had already decided on tonight’s Menu.

‘Slurp’

It was the cold noodles, in a bowl with chilled soup. Sungjin drank directly from the bowl that Dalupin served the noodles in. It was so refreshing after the torturous desert Raid.

“You look much better now, Master.”

Soldamyr said sitting across the table. Thanks to ‘Spiritual Link’ he was able to stay at ‘Ninety Nine Nights’ along with Cain.

“Of course. Kutan Desert is the only desert I’ve been to. That being said, don’t you need to eat something?”

“Yes, I only need to absorb mana from the atmosphere.”

“I see...”

‘Slurp slurp’

Cain was busily wolfing up the chicken meat. Sungjin petted his head.

“Good good, eat a lot, Cain.”

Cain was definitely bigger now. Last time it wasn’t too

noticeable, but now Sungjin was absolutely certain. Cain was growing at a very fast pace each day.

‘Does this even make sense?’

Sungjin wondered, but he quickly dismissed his thoughts; time itself flowed strangely in the Black Market.

The Raid always began in the morning, but by the time they returned, it was late afternoon. It wouldn't be strange if several days passed while Sungjin was participating in the raid. Once he was done with his meal,

“See you later Soldamyr. Bye Cain.”

Facing his host, Sungjin thanked him.

“Thank you for the meal.”

Sungjin left and returned to his room. He was fatigued due to the desert heat.

He filled the tub and lay in the bath as he always did.

“Haa...”

Sungjin couldn't help but sigh. He knew it would be a tough raid,

but it was far more difficult than he had anticipated. It was physically taxing, but

‘Kill me, and continue forward. Survive to the end and save us from our imprisonment. Please, bring salvation to mankind.’

After killing Igor with his own hands, he felt an internal turmoil. He had forgotten somehow but

‘Once the final raid is beaten, Everyone trapped in the Purgatory will be revived.’

Igor and the Operator had reminded him of his mission. Very likely, the salvation of mankind rested on his shoulders. It was a heavy burden to take.

Sungjin raised his gaze to the ceiling.

‘But... this isn’t something I can clear on my own...’

If he could complete every raid by himself, it would be perfect, but that was impossible. The way the Raids had been designed, cooperation with several teammates was necessary to clear it.

The further along the raid he progressed, the more important his teammates became. It was not only about having strong teammates but having teammates he could trust. But often it was difficult to find both qualities in the same person.

It was true in the ‘real world’, and it was especially true in the Raid. He couldn’t help but recall Igor’s words.

‘In some ways, isn’t this just like how the world works? Competing over limited resources? This game is structured this way; work together until you clear the raid, and then Kill. Take the contribution points by force. This is a far more profitable outcome.’

He wasn’t wrong. The design of the Raid seemed to encourage troll activity. It would be extremely rare to be able to find kind-hearted yet strong individuals, especially in a system that rewarded team killing.

‘So... does this system favor evil over good?’

If that was true, then something needed to be done, considering his ‘previous failure’. Sungjin lay back in the tub and thought to himself. He recalled Serin and Igor’s case.

‘If I really intend to complete the final raid... I can’t be the only one to grow stronger... I need to overcome the system and be able to influence the raid as a whole...’

And then he thought of something.

‘Overcome the system.’

There was a place where that might be possible. Sungjin got up from the bath and wiped himself down with a towel.

‘Knock Knock’

Dalupin appeared as if he knew when Sungjin might be done with the bath.

“Please come in”

Dalupin greeted him politely and then handed over a piece of paper.

“It is the information brochure on the next Chapter.”

Sungjin accepted it and asked Dalupin

“Dalupin I have a special request for tonight.”

Go ahead and ask.”

“Please wake me up at. At 4:20 am... no, make that 4:10 am.”

“Four in the morning?”

The Owl demi-human stared at him quizzically, not understanding what this was about. Dalupin blinked a few times. Sungjin answered

“Yes. You sleep during the day anyway, right?”

There was not an instance where Dalupin ever refused.

“Understood.”

After he had left, Sungjin went straight to bed. He had to sleep earlier tonight. He had to wake up at 4:10 am to make it to the hidden market which opened at 4:30.

TL Note: The Romance of the Three Kingdoms was called Legendary Ancient Omnibus, but in this chapter, it is called a Unique Legendary item. It seems going forward, this is the verbiage the Author will be sticking to. Just slight shift in terminology, nothing substantial changed since we already knew that only one could exist (already unique)

Chapter 044 – Black Market Fifth Shopping (2)

‘Knock Knock’

Sungjin opened his eyes. Soon,

‘Knock Knock’

He heard the knock on the door again. Sungjin turned towards the door and said

“I woke up. Thank you very much Dalupin.”

He didn’t hear anyone from the outside anymore. Sungjin got up and stretched. After lightly washing his face, he dressed up and went out the door.

Dalupin was watching Sungjin while blinking. Sungjin looked towards him and said

“I’ll be going then.”

“But... where are you going at this hour?”

Sungjin stopped to turn and look at him.

“Are you asking because you really do not know?”

Dalupin fell silent. Sungjin turned his body to face him.

“Don’t be like that, Dalupin. I don’t want to come to resent the man who shelters and feeds me.”

He was curious as to what expression Dalupin had on his face, but Sungjin left the door.

“Woof”

Cain was watching him from the outside. He wanted to follow Sungjin.

“Ah... Cain. Don’t... don’t come this time.”

Cain answered

“Woof woof”

He barked twice. It seemed he wanted to come anyway. Sungjin stared at him for a moment before replying.

“...Ok, do as you like.”

Sungjin led the way into the Black Market. Cain followed closely

behind him. The market was dead quiet at night.

The Black Market existed for the sake of providing service to a single Hunter. If the hunter was asleep, there was no reason to continue operations. With the exception of a single shop.

Sungjin was searching for a lone shop. It was hidden deep within the Black Market; It was one of the most difficult shops to locate.

‘It should be around here...’

But he couldn’t see it. Sungjin asked the Operator.

“Operator, what time is it?”

[It is currently 4:32 am 32 Seconds.]

‘I got here a little early.’

Sungjin squatted for a second to look at Cain in the eye.

“Cain, the place where I am going... I mean, the person I am going to meet.... He’s someone dangerous. I do not know for sure, but... that’s what I feel. So you have to remain calm, okay?”

“Woof”

Cain replied with a short cry. Sungjin was playing with Cain’s fur when he saw the light blink on and off.

Sungjin turned to look. Then he saw that it wasn’t the light that blinked but the surrounding, which was suddenly growing darker. There was a shop covered in darkness. It was the darkest place in the entire market, darker than anywhere else.

‘...That must be it.’

Sungjin swallowed and then tried to go into the shop. But.’

“Whine... Whine...”

Cain was acting unlike himself and was very fearful.

“Cain, if you don’t want to come, I’ll go alone. Go rest at Ninety Nine Nights.

Cain paced around restlessly and then sat down.

‘I guess he can’t help it.’

“Ok, just wait there Cain. I’ll be back.”

Sungjin entered the darkness. Within the shop was a stairway leading down to the basement. If not for the sensation of his feet touching the stairs, he wouldn't have been able to tell there was anything there due to the sheer darkness.

Sungjin slowly and cautiously made his way towards the basement. Once the stairs ended, there was a small candle lighting up in what appeared to be a bar. There was not a single customer inside.

Save for an individual seated in the back corner in the dark.

‘What a terrible taste...’

Sungjin walked over while thinking so. The Operator gave an announcement.

[This place is the hidden shop, ‘Darker than Black’]

Sungjin glanced at the cube. The explanation ended there. Normally she would continue by saying

‘This place sells a variety of Katanas’

‘You can enjoy various flavors of tea in this shop for free.’

But there was no such explanation for this place.

‘Well... I guess that makes sense. How fitting that there is no explanation about the purpose of this shop.’

Sungjin walked over to the man sitting in the corner and sat across from him. Finally, the man opened his mouth to speak.

“He who searches for answers finds questions, and he who searches for questions finds answers. Welcome, young one. What do you seek?”

Sungjin was trying to see the man across the table. He couldn't make out the details due to the darkness. The man opened his mouth and said

“Do you wish to see my face? Let there be light! Illuminate!”

A small orb of light emerged from his hands and floated above the table. Sungjin was now able to see the man. He was a human.

All the other vendors were demi-humans mixed with animals. But this man was 100% human. He didn't look particularly weird, but it was strange.

His facial features gave off the feeling that he was Asian, and yet at certain angles, he looked western. While Sungjin was staring at him

“But why does my appearance matter?”

His face transformed; To Igor's face. Sungjin was shocked. The man continued to speak, as his face continuously shifted. This time it was Serin

“Something like”

Hiro's face

“Appearances”

Baltren's face

“Have no value.”

And after the last phrase, his face returned to normal. He continued,

“If you have questions, ask, if you have something you need, request. I exist only to fulfill those things.”

Sungjin was about to say something when he was cut off.

“With compensation. I will do, or answer anything with appropriate compensation.”

Sungjin hesitated for a moment before asking

“It exists, doesn’t it? An item that lets you move between raids.”

*

Sungjin lifted up his coffee mug. After taking a sip, he looked into the cup’s content. Black Coffee. It was black, but nowhere near as black as the darkness that had surrounded him.

‘What an apt name, Darker than Black...’

Thinking so, Sungjin picked up a green book he had laid on top of the table.

Spell Book – Polymorph

5th Class Green magic

Transform the target into a sheep. Duration depends on the Magic Power. If the polymorphed target is hit, the spell is undone.

Soldamyr began to speak needlessly.

“It is a great spell. When you face multiple enemies, it is useful for polymorphing one or two until you finish the rest.”

Sungjin had seen the effects firsthand, and so he knew it was a good spell. He lifted up the book higher and said

“Memorize”

The spellbook burnt up with a green light.

[Spell – Polymorph memorized.]

[The incantation for the spell is ‘Discard your fangs and become a tame sheep! Polymorph!’]

Next, Sungjin picked up a blue book.

Spell Book – Chain Lightning

6th class Blue Magic

Fire a bolt of lightning that hits the target and jumps on nearby enemies.

Each successive enemy hit by the lightning reduces the damage for the next target.

Once again, Soldamyr piped up.

“This is my signature skill. I cannot count the number of enemies that I have defeated using this spell.”

Boasting and reminiscing about his past was his signature skill. Sungjin was about to put the Genie back in the lamp when the Genie spoke again.

“One thing to note is that if you previously used Polymorph on an enemy, attacking other enemies with this magic may unintentionally strike them and undo the spell. Please keep this in mind as you use the two spells you have learned.”

Sungjin thought his explanations made sense. He nodded.

‘Understood. Thank you for your tips, Soldamyr.’

Sungjin lifted up the book and shouted

“Memorize”

The Spell book burnt up with a blue luminescence. Since he was done memorizing the spells, it was time to raise the stats.

“Operator”

Sungjin called for the Operator. He told her the stat distribution he had thought of.

“Increase Strength by 1500, Dexterity by 2000, Endurance by 1000, Magic Power by 700, Mind Power by 1500.”

[Applied.]

“Show me my stats.”

The Operator displayed his stats on the hologram.

Strength 5736 4412 (+1324)

Dexterity 6621 5093 (+1528)

Endurance 4310 3315 (+995)

Magic Power 2105 1619 (+486)

Mind Power 2616 2012 (+604)

Unallocated Points: 0

What he learned from the previous stat allocation was the importance of Mind Power. After raising Magic Power to a high level, he found that he was unable to use magic when he needed to.

Sungjin initially thought that he would increase his magic power slowly over time, but as he saw during the Kutan Desert raid, the effects were quite powerful, and it was very comfortable fighting against monsters with spells.

‘Incinerate everything in your path! Fireball!’

Without that spell, killing sandworms that popped out of the ground would have been much more annoying. Sungjin stared at the modified status window for a second.

‘At the current state, there should be no problem with magic... I think I have more than enough status points.’

Sungjin considered his dilemma. With his stats, there was no longer a shadow of a doubt that Sungjin could beat the raids with stats alone. There was only one issue he needed to make a decision on.

‘Should I try the next raid with the Treasure Hunter?’

He didn’t think that there would be any problem. Almost every chapter had turned into a treasure hunt for Sungjin anyway.

With every chapter, Sungjin had grown so powerful that clearing it posed no challenge anymore. So, the most obvious choice of action was to test how it would be to keep Treasure Hunter title active.

“Operator, change my title to Treasure Hunter.”

[Applied.]

Sungjin finished all his preparations, so he picked up the sandwich sitting next to his mug of coffee and took a bite.

The bread was soft and the lettuce crisp. The folded piece of ham perfectly complimented the rest of the sandwich. While enjoying the sandwich, he read the sheet of paper in front of him.

‘Information on Count Dimitri’s Castle Ruins’

Sungjin asked the Operator without looking away from the sheet.

“Operator, how much longer until the Raid begins?”

[36 minutes and 24 seconds.]

‘Plenty of time.’

Sungjin slowly read the content from top to down on the information sheet. Sungjin was more nervous than usual.

By the end of this raid, he was planning on buying ‘that item’ which would allow Sungjin to intervene in other raids.

Unlike other times, Sungjin focused on the details written on the information sheet. What caught his eyes were the section about the boss himself.

...Boss Count Dimitri’s special ability is ‘Drink Blood’. If he succeeds in drinking blood, then he regains health and is empowered. Protecting your allies is the key to success in this raid.

‘Protecting... I’m not very good at this...’

And while reading through the information page, he was teleported away, to ‘Count Dimitri’s Castle Ruins’.

Chapter 045 – Count Dimitri’s Castle Ruins

(1)

‘Heee~’

The sound of a horse’s neigh could be heard from the distance. And outside the shaking carriage window, a tall tower could be seen. The moon hung low over the tower, and unknown beasts were flying in the moonlit sky.

‘Klopp klopp klopp klopp’

The shaking of the carriage matched the sound of the horse’s hooves. The place Sungjin was summoned to was inside of a shaking horse drawn carriage. More specifically, a carriage headed towards the Castle Ruins.

[Welcome. This is Count Dimitri’s Castle Ruins]

[It is the ruins of a castle built thousands of years ago.]

[Please be warned: The inhabitants of this castle]

[Have lived here since the time it was built.]

The Operator gave an announcement, and the carriage stopped just as she finished. The carriage was parked outside a large door. A creepy droning voice could be heard from the outside.

“We have arrived, sir Hunter.”

Sungjin finally opened the door and emerged from within. In front of the door, the carriage driver was waiting for him. The driver was missing his head. This was his second time seeing him, but it still creeped him out.

‘I don’t like this place....’

Sungjin walked over and stood by the entrance.

“Haaam~”

He couldn’t help but yawn. It was because he woke up very early in the morning.

[Synchronizing hunters.]

Sungjin blinked and watched the people as they emerged. And as was his habit, he checked their titles first.

‘Armored Soldier’

‘Guard’

‘First Class Marksman’

It was then that he noticed. Sungjin thought he hadn’t seen clearly, so he rubbed his eyes and squinted.

‘Wait... am I seeing this correctly?’

He had not mistaken. Tall stature with shaven head, strange tattoo all over; it was a monk with blue eyes. He had an appearance that would stand out anywhere.

Sungjin already knew his name.

“Mahadas!”

Sungjin shouted out the name before he could hold himself. It was the first time that he ran into someone from his previous life since the restart. Above the monk’s head read ‘Elite Pugilist’. The monk turned to look at Sungjin.

[“Have we met?”](#)

Where we wrote “Have we met?” the word by word translation becomes “Do you know this 소승 小乘”, Which means “Lesser Vehicle”, which is a way for monks to respectfully lower themselves and refer to themselves (a form of self-referencing pronoun, such as “I”). This is one of the few pronouns in Korean that is different (Japanese has like watashi, ore, boku, etc)

Yes. Yes, they have. He was one of the few that survived until the end. When only a few dozen people are left, you often ran into teammates from previous rounds.

Although he wasn’t lucky enough to make it to the ‘final 10’, he

had partied up with Sungjin on three occasions. They have struggled together for survival.

And now they ran into each other during this life very early on.

‘What a small world...’

Sungjin couldn’t help but hold his hands and shake it. Mahadas blinked a few times and stared at Sungjin, surprised.

“...How did you come to know me...?”

Thanks to having met three times in Raids, Sungjin already knew his background fairly well. He was originally a professional Tae Kwon Do fighter from Canada. Once he earned the championship for North America, he was recruited into the MMA scene.

His toughness was legendary and as was the reach of his punches. And with his training in Tae Kwon Do, his kicking skills were ranked very high. With perfect physique for fighting, the MMA scene eagerly anticipated his debut match.

However, during a practice match, a close friend and fellow athlete, died after an accidental kick to the face.

So he put behind his multimillion dollar contract and entered into a Buddhist Monastery in Korea. Gazing at Sungjin with his shocking sky blue eyes, he said

“If you know who I am, you must be Korean... But I am nothing more than an ordinary monk now. Please forget about my past.”

Then, someone else in the group recognized Mahadas; ‘Armored Soldier’. He raised his face plate and said

“Ah, I think I recognize you too. You’ve shaved but... you were some sort of a fighter right? MMA or something?”

His facial features suggested that the man was of South American descent. Perhaps from Mexico. Mahadas turned away, feeling uncomfortable for being recognized.

“That’s all in the past.”

It was then that the tall ‘Guard’ decided to speak up.

“Hey, it’s okay getting to know each other, but let’s include everyone, alright?”

And the last person there also piped in. The short Asian ‘First Class Marksman’

“Yeah. I don’t know if the tattooed monk is famous or not, but let’s first make preparations to beat the raid.”

Sungjin finally let go of the Monk’s hands. The two hunters were

right, and this was Mahadas's first time meeting Sungjin. Acting friendly and familiar more than this would probably be unwelcome.

It was then that the Raid Objectives popped up.

Count Dimitri's Castle Ruins Raid

Objective – Hunt the Thousand year Count 'Dimitri'

Time limit: 1 hour 30 minutes

[Raid will begin in 3 minutes.]

At her announcements, the Hunters gathered up and began preparations. The "Guard" began with his self-introduction.

"I am Dominic Spencer. I am from England, and as you can see, I use the Spear."

He held up his spear for others to see and then he added.

"I am trying out some magic spells too. 'Offensive spells'? Either way, it's fire-based magic."

The 'Armored Soldier' twirled his mustache as he spoke up.

“My name is Giovani. I was from Mexico... No, I am from Mexico.”

He seemed to be hiding something.

‘Is he an illegal immigrant? Not that it matters right now...’

If he were anything like Santiago, it would be problematic. The Asian man holding a bow was Chinese.

“My name is Peng Long. Chinese. I mostly use the bow, but I am also trying out magic.”

Mahadas gathered his hands together in a prayer and answered

“My name is Mahadas. My nationality... I am Canadian but... it doesn’t matter now. Before entering the monastery, I had been taught Martial Arts... and that is what I use to fight.”

Sungjin glanced to his side. Because there was actually a Chinese man on the team, it would be difficult to lie. So Sungjin revealed his true Nationality.

‘Kei. Korean.’

‘Guard’ Dominic Spencer took the lead. There was almost always one in a group of 5 that is able to rally the team effectively.

“Let’s discuss what we’re going to do. Especially... you know from the information page... The boss is a vampire that can suck blood and empower himself...”

Giovani continued to rub his mustache into a point as he spoke. It seemed to be a deeply ingrained habit.

“So... if he sucks blood he gets several times stronger?”

Sungjin had experienced it before, as well as read up on the information sheet. Once he sucks someone’s blood, he gets fully healed, and his stats increase by several times.

In the previous raid, there was a case where one of the team members got bit. And so the raid was just barely cleared before time ran out.

‘It would be great if it was possible for me to go alone and just solo the raid...’

Sungjin gazed up to look at the Castle Ruins. This raid was different from all the previous ones.

Unlike the previous raids, this zone was not designed to be traversed solo. That is until the raid boss was defeated.

It wasn’t yet clear if the ‘Hidden boss’ or ‘Hidden piece’ could be

hunted alone, but until the raid boss is cleared, Sungjin was forced to tag along with his team. Sungjin glanced at his teammates.

They were planning their positions in a formation.

“Since Giovanni is a tank, please stand in the front... followed by Martial Arts Monk and the Korean Swordsman...and me. Then Peng Long in the back. Right?”

“Right. Also... I noticed that at first the weapons and roles were randomly distributed, but as time progressed, it now looks like the system assigns us to teams according to roles, don't you think so?”

“I think you're right. 1 Tank, 3 DPS, and then backline support. Since... 2 Raids ago? Something like that.”

He would have to wait to see their individual skill, but no one appeared to be of poor character yet. And since Mahadas was on his team, Sungjin could relax a bit.

While the four men continued to talk among themselves, Sungjin was thinking by himself.

‘First, buy the Item from ‘Darker than Black’ using the raid reward... and starting with the raid after that... I will start to influence raids other than mine.’

He already had 3 Legendary items. He even owned the Unique Legendary item ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms.’ Raids no longer

posed any challenge to him. It was time to start thinking of the big picture.

‘Search through other raids and help those with good moral character, and those who aren’t... Kill them.... And handpick the ‘final 10’ myself.’

This was Sungjin’s new plan of action as a result of the ‘Igor event’. He was more than strong enough to affect as many raids as he could within the limit of his power; he needed to exert his influence over the overall raid as much as possible.

The end goal was to create the ‘Final 10 Survivors’ who were all incredibly talented as well as those he could trust. People upon whom he could depend on with his life. Only then, would it be possible to clear the final raid.

Last time, the final 10 were all unbelievably powerful individuals. Befitting to be called ‘Selected by the Gods’. But because of this, they had bickered and argued with each other without a good sense of cooperation and camaraderie until they were all wiped out.

The raids were impossible to clear with simply ‘strong individuals’. He knew by experience.

‘Within the raids, I will rise as a new God to rewrite the rules and take control over everything.’

While he was thinking so

“Hey, Korean Teenager!”

The ‘Guard’ Dominic was addressing him.

“What do you think?”

Sungjin didn’t know how to respond for a moment. He wasn’t paying attention to the conversation. Now that he noticed, everyone was looking at him. Giovanni realized that Sungjin was spacing out and complained.

“Hey, what are you thinking? This is a matter of life and death. How can you be so irresponsible?”

They must have been making quite a strategy among themselves while Sungjin was day dreaming. This party appeared to be very cooperative. At least for now.

‘What should I say?’

Sungjin considered his options for a moment while pursing his lips. But he decided to answer truthfully. He had to work with these people for the time being.

“Um. Truthfully, I don’t need something like strategy. And... same goes for the rest of you.”

Everyone's eyes grew wide at his claim. Dominic narrowed his eyes out of suspicion and questioned Sungjin.

“What do you mean?”

Sungjin answered

“...you’ll see. Just follow me.”

Instead of answering he put his right hand on Moon Specter and the left hand on the Blood Vengeance. Before he could unsheath his two swords, Peng Long commented

“Two... Two swords? Dual Wielding?”

Martial Arts expert Mahadas commented as well.

“That... shouldn’t be easy to fight with...”

This wasn’t something that Sungjin could easily explain in a short time. Pulling out the two swords, Sungjin put on a fancy display of martial prowess before the others.

“Woosh woosh woosh woosh”

The two swords glistened in the moonlight. The others who had thought just a moment ago ‘we might have a troll’ were left speechless.

And meanwhile, the Operator announced the time remaining.



[The raid will begin in 10 Seconds.]

Chapter 046 – Count Dimitri’s Castle Ruins (2)

[3, 2, 1, 0 Raid commencing.]

At the same time,

‘Creak’

The iron gates automatically opened inward. But no one was moving. They were watching Sungjin’s sword dance in a daze.

Sungjin held the Moon Specter and Blood Vengeance in a cross and tilted his head towards the entry way.

“Let’s go.”

Sungjin stood at the vanguard. Followed closely by Giovani, Mahadas, Dominic, and finally Peng Long. With the exception of Sungjin, it was the original formation.

Inside of the iron gates was a large garden. Even though it was called a garden, it wasn’t like it was full of life. Dried and cracked potteries, broken pieces of glass, long dead flowers and twisted up trees, the garden was full of death.

“Woof! Woof woof!”

A dog’s barking could be heard from the inside. Two Doberman showed themselves, but they did not look like any ordinary Doberman.

Past the rotten cheeks, the teeth could be seen, and the eyelids were missing, showing the entirety of their eyeballs; They were zombie dogs. The hunters tensed up at their grotesque appearance. With the exception of Sungjin.

Sungjin slowly made his way forward. The zombie dogs backed up to keep a distance from him barking all the while.

“Snarl! Woof woof!”

They continued to threaten him. Ignoring them, Sungjin continued forward. Eventually, the dogs charged towards Sungjin.

“Kaa!”

Heavily decayed with nearly nonexistent skin, the Zombie moved much faster than a live Doberman. But

“Woosh Woosh”

With a flash of Sungjin’s two swords, the Dobermans were bisected instantly. Sungjin continued to walk up to the front door

without any sense of caution or urgency.

He felt that something was missing. Looking behind him, the Hunters were all standing with their mouth agape. Only Mahadas was looking at the Doberman corpses. Sungjin shouted out to them

“Aren’t you coming? Come quickly; we have to go together.”

At his words, the Hunters came running towards the Castle entryway. In front of the gates, there were five strange looking stones.

“You all read the information sheet, right? Let’s stand on top of each stone.”

Obediently the Hunters followed his instructions. And once all five took their place, a bell could be heard ringing in the distance.

“Ding~ Ding~ Ding~”

And the hunters heard a voice coming from above.

“Ah, welcome! It’s been such a long time since we last had guests!”

Hunters all looked up towards the sky. A cloud of bats flew together and formed a single figure on top of the tower. It was in the form of a man with a long cape.

“How do you do? I am the master of this Castle.”

The man whose face was whiter than the moon politely bowed to them.

“I am Count Dimitri.”

He opened his mouth and smiled. His sharp fangs could be seen clearly. Everyone was taken aback by his fangs, but Sungjin had other thoughts.

‘Wait... Wait a minute...hold on.’

“I have prepared a fun recreational event for our dear guests on each floor.”

Sungjin quietly spoke to the Cube. It was barely audible.

“Operator, get me Al Zard.”

The magic carpet emerged from within the Cube at his request.

“I have spent a long time preparing these fun little entertainments so you should have lots of fun. Enough that you wouldn’t want to leave ever again. Hu hu hu hu..”

The Thousand Year Count Dimitri let out a strange laughter. The Hunters watched him completely absorbed. But Sungjin was distracted; he was making a plan.

‘If I take Al Zard up to him and kill him now, wouldn’t the Raid be cleared?’

“I hope you enjoy your stay.”

At the same time as his farewell,

“Creak”

The gates began to lift letting out rusty noises of moving gears. Before the Count stood back up from his deep bow, Sungjin threw Al Zard forward and shouted

“Flight”

The Magic Carpet opened itself. But

“Pew~”

Peng Long’s arrow flew first. Sungjin watched the arrow fly in surprise. The Arrow made it all the way in front of the Count’s nose, but with a ‘pop’ the Count reverted back to a large cloud of bats.

His laughter filled the sky.

“Hahahahaha~”

‘Damn’

Sungjin chased after the bats using Al Zard. He could hear the Count’s voice coming from the mass of bats.

“You can only play with me after you’ve finished with the other little recreations I have prepared for you. Please come to the top of the tower. Then, I will do my best to entertain you personally.”

‘I don’t have time for that’

A high-speed aerial chase ensued. Sungjin chanted an incantation while chasing the bats.

“Murderous thunder, Jump from foe to foe! Chain Lightning”

A ball of lightning gathered in Sungjin’s right hand and was shot out of the Moon Specter like a bullet. But, a small portion of the bats separated from the main mass and prevented the main body from being harmed.

The bats that were hit by the lightning fell to the ground, but the masses of bats continued to escape. Once the bats reached the other side of the castle, they flew towards the moat. Sungjin began

to recite a different spell.

“Incinerate everything in your...”

But while he was doing so, the bats began to enter the sewer built on the inside of the moat. Sungjin quickly finished off the rest of the incantations.

“...path! Fireball!”

He fired the fireball, but most of the bats made it into the sewer.

“Boom”

The fireball exploded and greatly damaged the entry way. Sungjin flew to the front of the sewer to look at it. It was very small.

It would hardly fit a human being, or even Cain (albeit he did grow bigger recently).

‘...Welp.’

Sungjin returned to the front entrance of the castle using the Magic Carpet, filled with disappointment. The hunters watched him return.

“Did you manage to catch him?”

Giovani asked. Sungjin knocked on the Cube next to him and replied

“If that were the case, this guy would have said something.”

Sungjin glanced at Peng Long. Because of his arrow, the Count was able to get a bigger head start.

‘I can’t really tell him off though since all he wanted to do was help...’

Sungjin shook his head and entered the castle. The other Hunters followed suit. The interior of the castle was dark. Dominic looked over to the cube and said

“Operator, I still have that lantern from the Cemetery, right? Please take it out for me.”

‘You don’t need it...’

Sungjin thought to himself, but he didn’t say anything. He didn’t want others to know this was already his second time experiencing everything. While the hunters were busy trying to light up the lanterns,

“Ti ta dii~”

From the dark, a violin and other classical instruments began to play an orchestral song. At the same time, the lights in the castle came on. On the first floor was a large corridor.

The previously pitch black ceiling was now brightly illuminated by chandeliers.

“Daa~ raa ta da~”

The classical music continued to play in the background while

“Hahahahaha~”

“Hohohohoho~”

Unnaturally laughing pairs of men and women appeared. The men wore a dress suit, and the women wore a fancy dress. The couples danced to the tune of the music, but each of them wore strange looking masks.

The hunters' faces had various emotions displayed on them. Dominic muttered

“This chapter... just what...”

It was written in the ‘Information sheet’ but it was still odd to experience it first hand. Sungjin addressed the hunters.

“Don’t be put off by them, stay alert.”

And in a moment during the middle of the song, suddenly

“Bang”

A loud smashing of the keys of the Piano could be heard, and the music stopped playing. Sungjin turned to the hunters and informed them

“Ok, it begins now. I will take care of most of them, so try to hunt safely.”

“Kee ta taan~ ta ta taan~”

The elegant and graceful music was replaced with an eerie screechy sound. The dancing couples threw away their masks all at the same time.

“Ugh...”

Someone gagged upon seeing their faces. Behind the masks were deathly white faces, with fangs showing from their lips. Their faces twisted into a wicked grimace, and they began to screech.

“KYAA!”

“You’re supposed to bait one of them at a time and fight them, but...”

Sungjin muttered something. He held the Moon Specter and Blood Vengeance like a cross and charged alone into the narrow corridor. The well-dressed vampires also came charging towards Sungjin.

Unlike the other kinds of undead, these were extremely fast. But there was no way these vampires could match the power of Sungjin who was wielding Legendary Tier swords in each hand.

With each swing of his sword; heads, arms, and legs were cut off. While Sungjin charged onwards through the Corridor like a hurricane, a few stragglers began to attack the other four Hunters.

“Wait! Here they come! Careful!”

Giovani came to the Vanguard and raised his shield. Dominic raised his spear, and Peng Long nocked an arrow. But

“Taha!”

Mahadas dashed forward and kicked one of the vampires. He broke the chin of a female Vampire in a single blow.

He turned to face the Male vampire and said

“Overheat”

With the command, the gauntlet he wore glowed bright red. Using the bright red gauntlet, he landed a punch exactly on the vampire’s diaphragm.

‘Splat’

A strange sound erupted; A sound that was difficult to imagine that it could come from a human being.

‘Wheeze”

The Vampire let out a strange sound of agony. When Mahadas pulled back his fist, a large hole had been punched through the vampire’s stomach.

Giovani, who had been tense, lowered his shield. Dominic and Peng Long also relaxed their weapons for a moment.

“Taha!”

Mahadas began to hunt the multitude of Vampires with incredible speed and power. The Korean ahead of them already formed a mountain of vampire corpses. The three remaining Hunters glanced at each other.

They understood deep inside. This raid could probably be cleared with just the two of them. But Peng Long began loosing arrows towards the Vampires in the distance.

Giovani and Dominic saw that and also prepared their weapons.

“Uryah!”

They charged towards the Zombies.

*

‘Guard’ Dominic swung his Spear around, and couldn’t help but feel that this chapter was very strange.

‘The chapter is one thing... but the teammates, especially those two...’

Just surviving from chapter to chapter was a struggle. Had been a struggle. It was nice to get high contribution percentage, but survival came first. He had fought hard for the sake of his own survival first, and contribution second.

But there was something very different with this chapter. The Korean teenager who charged onwards, slicing off limbs of vampires like a human tornado using two swords. And the monk who beat the monsters to a pulp using his fist.

Between the two of them, he had to work hard to scrape together contribution points. He was also part of the top 0.01% of the best Hunters among humanity.

‘No matter how strong the allies are, they cannot gift contribution points...’

Dominic’s weapon was a Spear. It was a weapon designed to fight enemies from behind the cover of the tank. But right now, the tank Giovanni wasn’t able to get any points either.

The Korean and the monk were rushing ahead killing everything in sight rendering defense and ranged support unnecessary. Peng Long had been able to try and get some contribution by shooting enemies far into the distance, but Dominic had no such ranged abilities. After considering his options, the only solution he could come up with was to charge ahead with his spear, even if he had to put himself at risk.

The Vampire whose jaws were shattered was wandering about in front of him.

“Yaaah!”

He charged forward and stabbed at the Vampire’s head with his spear.

‘Stab’

With a piercing noise, the Vampire died without even being able to let out a cry. He felt a rush of adrenaline upon hunting the undead.

‘What if... my teammates aren’t strong, but it is the enemies that are weak?’

Dominic thought as he charged towards another Vampire.

Chapter 047 – Count Dimitri’s Castle Ruins

(3)

After killing a single Vampire with his spear, Dominic scanned the hallway for another lone Vampire.

‘There’

He took his spear and charged forward once more.

“H...hey!”

Someone shouted at him from behind, but he ignored it. If he didn’t do something, he would be left with no contribution points to speak of.

“Don’t worry; I am also skilled.”

He answered.

“Endless Needle!”

He shouted as he clashed against the Vampires. He aimed for the neck and stabbed with the spear.

“Kyaa!”

The Vampire tried to dodge the spear by tilting its head, but the weapon suddenly split into dozens of spears.

And one or two of them pierced through the Vampire's neck.

“Kuh...!”

The Vampire grabbed the newly formed holes in its neck and fell to the ground. He had now taken two down and was feeling more confident.

He searched for additional targets.

Luckily he found a female Vampire wandering by herself in the distance. It turned to look at Dominic and screeched.

“Kaa!”

‘So you are his pair!’

He cast a spell

“Flying ball of flames, Fire bolt!”

The Fire Bolt he fired was aimed at the Vampire’s feet. The Vampire jumped high into the sky. But this is what he was aiming for.

It would be easier to target enemies in the air.

‘I shall send you with your partner.’

He watched the Vampire in the air to time its landing and have it land on the spear. However,

“Ugh”

He felt piercing pain on one of his legs. He couldn’t move his feet. He looked down to see.

The Vampire he thought he had defeated had stabbed his ankle with its long nails. It was still alive despite the holes in its neck.

Dominic opened his eyes wide. But despite the pain and the surprise attack, he shouldn’t have taken his eyes away from his other foe.

“Kaaa!”

The female Vampire that dodged the Fire Bolt earlier was now upon him. He turned to look at her. She was descending faster than he had anticipated.

‘They can fly?’

His realization came too late. The Vampire was already past the spear tip. Dominic tried to take a step back, but his feet were held down by another Vampire.

The Vampire flew into his embrace, ten claws scratching his back open.

“Aaah!”

He screamed out loud in agony due to intense pain, but it was not over yet. The Vampire clamped down on his neck and drew blood.

“Ack..”

His vital was ripped open, and the blood supply to his brain stopped. Dominic felt faint, and he started losing consciousness. But before he passed out

“Pa!”

A sword came flying from somewhere and pierced the Vampire's head. The hands holding Dominic loosened up.

“Haa!”

The sword came flying back and cut through the neck of the Vampire sucking his blood. The head fell off, and along with it, the fangs holding onto his neck.

“Ta ho!”

Mahadas appeared and kicked away the head of the Vampire holding his leg. He caught Dominic as he was about to fall over

“Are you alright?”

“Kyaa!”

A crowd of Vampires tried to take advantage of the situation and surround them, but Giovanni appeared and blocked them with his shield. Meanwhile,

“Pew”

Peng Long's arrows pierced through one of the Vampire's arms. Giovanni pushed the Vampires back with his Shield and Axe.

While Giovanni was buying time, Kei appeared out of nowhere and severed the heads of all the Vampires like the wind.

The surviving Vampires were finished up in moments, and the battle was over for now. Giovanni looked over to Dominic to scold him for running ahead alone.

“I told you to...”

But he stopped himself once he saw Dominic’s ashen face.

*

Once Sungjin was done dealing with the last Vampire, he returned to the other hunters’ side. At the center lay Dominic. Sungjin inspected Dominic’s state.

‘Why did he overdo it?’

He was able to save Dominic thanks to ‘Telkron – Jester’s Gloves’, but his state looked dire. He was bleeding from his ankle and neck profusely.

‘If I was even a little bit slower... he would have already died. But... if he got bitten by a Vampire...’

Mahadas recited an incantation.

“By my authority, close the wound and remove the pain, Heal!”

A white light spilled out of his hands and covered Dominic’s injuries. His wounds disappeared wherever the light touched. Sungjin pursed his lips and gazed at him.

‘He still uses white magic...’

Mahadas was no tank, but because he fought without a weapon, he had to fight at the very front lines resulting in him getting injured often.

So in the previous life, Mahadas had used various white magic, recovery magic, and buff magic. It was a wise decision.

Thanks to Mahadas’s magic, Dominic’s condition improved. But his state was still strange.

“Are you alright Dominic?”

Dominic finally spoke

“I feel fine but... something’s weird... I feel dizzy.”

Sungjin asked the operator while watching Dominic.

“Operator, how long does ‘Blood Curse’ last?”

[Blood Curse, duration is 30 minutes.]

Peng Long asked

“Blood Curse?”

Sungjin frowned. Peng Long’s reaction reaffirmed his suspicion. The information sheet did not contain any mention of the Vampire’s bites.

‘Information sheet? Where’s the info?’

Sungjin came to distrust the Information sheet for this reason. Although it was informative, it always redacted few key information necessary to complete the raid.

Sungjin was about to open his mouth to explain the effects of the ‘Blood Curse’, but Mahadas calmly asked the Operator.

“Operator, what is the Blood Curse?”

The Operator gave an explanation in her usual expressionless tone.

[Blood Curse (Debuff): Duration 30 minutes. Lower all status points by 30% for the duration of the curse. Once the time runs out, the curse kills the target, and the target is reborn as a Vampire.]

Giovani whispered.

“Kills... my God. Is there no cure?”

Peng Long replied

“I checked every item in the consumable shop, but I’ve never seen anything that reverts curses.”

Sungjin shook his head.

“This is not a poison; It’s a curse. Does anyone have ‘Remove Curse’ or ‘Scroll of Remove Curse’?”

Everyone’s eyes grew large. It was probably their first time hearing about a curse. Dominic’s eyes lost its lustre as he fell into despair. Everyone fell into silence.

Sungjin thought about it for a moment.

‘Remove Curse... Soldamyr said that he couldn’t use White or Green schools of magics...’

There was no immediate answer. But, there was still a way. The only way available to them. Sungjin told them immediately.

“Even if we don’t have ‘Remove Curse’, there is still a way to save him. The only way.”

Mahadas asked

“How?”

“Complete the Raid before 30 minutes are up. As you all know, if you get teleported back to the Black Market, all your injuries go away.”

Everyone nodded at his words. Even if one took an otherwise fatal wound, if they were to be teleported to the Black Market, all their wounds would disappear as if nothing had happened.

But there was a problem with this method as well.

“Operator, how much time is left until the Raid is over?”

[1 hour 19 minutes and 4 seconds.]

Everyone turned to stare at Sungjin, thinking ‘so it’s impossible after all’. None of them had ever experienced being teleported back early; they had always been sent back when the time ran out.

“Even if we don’t hit the time limit, if we reach 100% completion for the raid...”

Sungjin was about to say, but he decided against it.

“I will do my best to save him, so please trust me. Giovanni.”

“Yes? What?”

Giovanni answered in panic at being called out.

“Please protect Dominic. Even though his status points were decreased, you two should be able to keep each other safe if you two work together.”

“Ah, got it.”

Giovanni’s helm moved up and down twice. Sungjin now looked over to Peng Long and Mahadas.

“You two, hunt with me. As fast as you can possibly manage.”

The other two men nodded as well. They haven’t had a chance to speak properly, but they already understood his strength; they trusted him.

“Let us hurry then.”

Sungjin pointed towards the elevator on the far side. Within the elevator was the same circular formation as the castle entrance.

“Please go stand on them.”

Everyone took their spots. Once all 5 of them took their place the elevator began to climb. Even if one of them died, they had to carry the corpse and place it on the slot in order for the elevator to continue moving.

This part was written on the information sheet, although it didn't help improve their chances of survival.

‘Clang clang clang clang’

The elevator made worrisome noises as it began to climb. Sungjin was thinking about various things as the elevator moved up.

‘Will I be able to kill the hidden boss and find the secret location within 30 minutes? I can try but...’

Still, there were two things going right for the team.

First was that the monsters were not spaced far apart like in Ahenna's forest or the Kutan Desert. They were all gathered up in the same floor. So all they had to do was clear each floor as fast as they could and kill ‘Count Dimitri’ and the hidden boss within the thirty minute time frame.

Second, he decided to bring ‘Treasure Hunter’ this time rather than Master Hunter. He would be able to find both of the hidden elements of this raid faster than any previous raids.

Of course, the thirty-minute window was extremely difficult to overcome. Sungjin glanced at Dominic. His face was very pale.

‘If 30 minutes are not enough... then with my own hands...’

Sungjin reviewed his options while having such thoughts.

‘Keep Romance of the Three Kingdoms for the Hidden boss. I may have to face the hidden boss alone. Then the only other thing I could use to reduce the time spent is...’

Sungjin took out Cain’s wooden figurine and Soldamyr’s golden lamp. He threw the figurine into the air and rubbed Soldamyr’s lamp. Soon,

“Woof woof!”

“Did you summon me, master?”

Two loyal summons appeared before him. The others stared at Sungjin out of surprise. Meanwhile

“Ding!”

The Elevator reached level 2. Level 2 was the Spider room. Due to the large amount of giant spider webs laid out, trying to clear the room normally would take considerable time and effort.

But this time was different. Sungjin ordered Soldamyr.

“Soldamyr.”

“Yes, master.”

Sungjin nodded.

“Burn them all.”

At his command, Soldamyr began an incantation.

“Eternal Flames of Hell!”

Blinding light and heat formed in Soldamyr’s hands, and the Spiders in the room turned towards the Elevator. One or two began to make their way towards the elevator, but it was too late.

“Inferno!”

The ball of fire left Soldamyr’s hands and quickly spread to everything it touched, setting them ablaze.

“Kiii~”

High-pitched screeches of the spiders filled the air as they cried out in agony. Several spiders ran amok across the room while on fire. It was a scene straight out of hell.

While the other hunters were afraid to make a move,

“Let’s go Cain.”

“Woof!”

A lone man and his trusty wolf ran into the room.

Chapter 048 – Count Dimitri’s Castle Ruins

(4)

Peng Long took a glance behind him. The room was littered with corpses of spiders. Spiders that were burnt to death, sliced to pieces, head kicked in and bitten to death by a wolf.

Giovani rebuked him from ahead.

“Hey, what are you doing, Chinese man? Get on.”

Peng Long looked forward again. The other four hunters, the Genie and the Wolf, were all in the elevator waiting for him.

“Ah, ok.”

Peng Long then took his spot on the elevator.

‘Clang clang clang clang’

Once all the Hunters were in place, the Elevator began to rise again; the metal scraped against the walls.

While the Elevator was moving, Peng Long glanced at Dominic’s face for a moment. His face was as pale as death, without a hint of vitality. The Vampire’s curse seemed to have sucked not only the stat points but also his motivation.

It was understandable; 30 minutes left in his life with the clock ticking away. Then suddenly

‘Sniff sniff sniff’

The large wolf went around the Elevator smelling everyone. Peng Long glared at the wolf.

Ever since ‘Ahenna’s Forest’ where he had almost perished upon being bitten by wolves, he had come to hate them unconsciously. The Korean hunter then issued a command.

“Cain, settle down.”

With one command the wolf obediently walked over and sat next to his feet like a tame puppy. Just a moment ago the Wolf was ripping the Spiders apart like a ferocious beast.

‘He sure is loyal to his master’

While he was lost in thought, Kei suddenly spoke to him

“Mr Peng Long.”

“Ah... Yes?”

“Do you have any abilities that allow you to fire multiple shots at once?”

Peng Long thought for a moment before replying.

“Ah, well I can use Split Arrow. I...”

He began to try and explain to them verbally, but instead, he stopped and opened up the status window of his bow to simplify things.

Dragon’s Claw Bow – Bow of Johan

Heroic Bow – Strength A Dexterity B

Active skill

Split Arrow (III)

After the initial arrow hits, several magical arrows gets fired in the same general area. Cooldown 5 minutes.

Dragon's Eye (III)

Fires an audible arrowhead to sense enemies out of the line of sight. Cooldown 5 minutes.

Bow wielded by the leader of the legendary 4 Great Thieves, Johan.

It is said that the effectiveness of the bow greatly depends on the wielder.

“It’s like this.”

Kei read the status window briefly and nodded.

“Then when I give the signal, shoot as many arrows as you can into the suits of armor.”

Peng Long tilted his head.

‘Hmm? Which suits of armor?’

Peng Long wanted to ask, but Kei already turned his head towards the Genie and gave him instructions.

“Soldamyr, prepare your Chain Lightning.”

“Understood, Master.”

While Peng Long was still out of it, the Elevator stopped moving.

“Ding!”

Accompanied by the bell, the Elevator doors opened. Unlike the first floor where they were greeted by dancing couples and music, and the spider swarm on the second floor, the third floor was dead silent.

In the long corridor, there was nothing but rows upon rows of empty suits of armor donned on top of Mannequins.

“What kind of room is this? Where are the enemies?”

Giovanni asked. Peng Long thought to himself

‘How did this man know that the next floor will have suits of armor?’

Peng Long also doubted that the man would answer his

questions. Kei gestured to him and said

“Ok begin shooting. Aim to hit as many enemies as you can.”

‘Enemies?’

Peng Long was filled with questions, but he decided to act as he was asked to. Starting with the ‘Blood Curse’, he knew far too much. Even details not displayed on the ‘Information sheet’.

Peng Long looked up at the ceiling. High above, a Chandelier was glistening where it hung.

‘That should work.’

He aimed for the Chandelier and shouted

“Split Arrows!”

His arrow accurately hit the Chandelier, and once it struck, dozens of magical arrows appeared and scattered all over the room. It hit a majority of the suits of armor standing in neat rows.

“Intruders detected.”

“To Arms”

“Defend the master”

The Mannequins wearing suits of armor came to life, brandishing their weapons. Their speed wasn't all that impressive.

Giovani readied his axe and shield. But Sungjin held him back.

“Wait for it... Wait for it.”

The Suits of Armor came alive and began marching towards the elevator in a single file, perfectly in sync with their footsteps.

“Just a bit more...”

Kei waited just a bit longer, and then he gave the Genie the signal.

“Soldamyr.”

The Genie immediately chanted an incantation.

“Murderous thunder, Jump from foe to foe!”

At the same time, Kei shouted out the same incantation as the Genie.

“Murderous thunder, Jump from foe to foe!”

Sparks of energy began to gather in their hands.

“Chain Lightning!”

“Chain Lightning!”

A blinding light shot out from both hands and flew towards the approaching army. The suit of armor in the front was hit and was lit on fire, while the lightning continued to jump from suit to suit. Those hit by the lightning fell one by one.

Only a few survived the attack and were standing on the far end of the room.

“Let’s go!”

The heavily armored enemies looked very tough, but due to the fact that they already took damage from the lightning bolt earlier, they were easily broken by even Giovanni and Dominic’s attacks.

The third floor was cleared in the blink of an eye. The Hunters quickly boarded the Elevator and took their places.

The elevator began to climb again.

Sungjin searched his memories.

‘What was on the fourth floor again?’

He remembered. It was Frankenstein’s monster room. It wasn’t very fast, so it didn’t prove to be very threatening, but it had such a high HP that it took forever to kill.

‘I think last time we attacked it nonstop for close to 10 minutes...’

The Frankenstein’s monster felt like a mid-boss. In fact, in terms of HP, it had a higher hp than any other enemies Sungjin had fought so far; even greater than Count Dimitri’s himself. It was inevitable that fighting Frankenstein’s monster would take a bit of time.

Sungjin looked down at his two swords, Moon Specter and Blood Vengeance.

‘...I guess it wouldn’t be bad to test out how high my specs really are.’

But

“Ugh...”

Dominic held his forehead and began to moan. There was no time to waste. He had to try his hardest to pull through. Sungjin turned to Soldamyr.

“Soldamyr, do you have any debuff magic that lowers the enemy’s defenses?”

“Of course.”

“Then use it right away on the enemy that will appear.”

“Acknowledged.”

Sungjin turned to the other hunters and said

“Please give me a hand with the next one. Attack it with everything you’ve got.”

Peng nodded, Mahadas gathered his hands into a Prayer and answered.

“Certainly.”

‘Ding!’

The Elevator stopped, and the bell rang. The fourth floor was a laboratory. Unfamiliar tools and unknown chemicals lay all over the place.

And at the center was a Giant, who stood still with his eye closed. Once the Hunters entered the floor, the strange contraption surrounding the giant began to move.

It injected strange chemicals into the giant’s chest, and sparks of electricity zapped its head.

“Kraugh!”

“Let’s go!”

Sungjin yelled as he dashed forward. Soldamyr chanted a spell.

“Fragile body, broken will, Weakness!”

A strange black light appeared over its head.

‘Pew’

Peng Long’s arrow hit its head dead on, but Frankenstein’s Monster wasn’t something that would die with just that. Sungjin

ran in brandishing his Dual Swords.

“Haa Yaah!”

He ran in shouting.

“Taho!”

Mahadas came flying in with a kick. Sungjin’s swords impaled deep into the monster’s chest, and Mahadas’s kick landed square on its chin.

*

‘Clang Clang Clang Clang’

The Elevator began moving up again. Sungjin looked behind him. The Frankenstein’s Monster lay there bloodied and in pieces.

‘This time it took about... a minute?’

Last time with all five Hunters it took almost 10 minutes, but this time it ended much quicker. Sungjin looked down at his swords.

‘The damage is on a whole new level compared to last time.’

The other hunters wouldn’t know, but Sungjin could tell the

difference after having fought the Frankenstein's Monster the second time.

‘...I might really be able to complete the raids by myself...

Sungjin took a look at the people around him.

Like a true monk, Mahadas showed no change in his state; he was standing peacefully.

But Giovani and Peng Long's expressions looked grim. Even though the Raid was progressing well, they looked concerned. Sungjin thought to himself,

‘It must be because of the Contribution level.’

He understood their feelings somewhat. If it were something like a desert or the cemetery where he could go alone, they wouldn't be able to tell just how much contribution Sungjin was taking. But from beginning to end, the party members could directly see just how much Sungjin had taken for himself; watching 70~80% of the contribution points being monopolized right in front of their eyes must have felt very threatening.

Even if they were weaker than Sungjin, these people were all within the top 0.01%; one of the strongest representatives of Humanity. They knew by experience that if they fail to grow stronger now, they will die for sure later on.

The cause of why Dominic acted rashly wasn't difficult to guess.

‘But it isn't as if I could afford to simply stop my growth...’

This was a dilemma, and Sungjin was fully aware of the implications. Becoming stronger meant weakening his allies, and in most cases indirectly getting them killed.

Becoming moderately stronger was better for his teammates, but Sungjin had become immensely powerful in the last five Raids.

Even Mahadas, who survived until the late game in the previous life, was having difficulty squeezing out any respectable amount of contribution points. Whereas, without Sungjin, he could have potentially gotten as much as 40% contribution.

And this side effect could only grow worse over time. [The rich grows richer and the poor grows poorer](#). Just like in reality.

The strong takes the larger share of the contribution and grows even stronger. Back on Earth, Sungjin had been part of the poorest of the population. But here, he was part of the richest... No. He was simply the richest one of all.

Once again, Igor's words echoed in his mind.

‘Isn't this just like how the world works?’

Sungjin bit his lips. Igor was definitely a vile man, but his words

continued to stick in his mind. Sungjin shook his head. He decided to erase Igor from his memories.

‘This is the last time I monopolize all the points. Using the points from this round, I will obtain ‘that item’ from ‘Darker than Black’... and this won’t happen anymore.’

He will clear the boss together with the team but leave the trash mobs alone for the others to take. And for himself, he will hunt enemies while jumping from raid to raid. With this method, the current dilemma will naturally resolve itself.

‘This game is structured this way’

Sungjin replied to the memory in his head.

‘Just because the structure is retarded does not mean that I have to act like a retard as well.’

Sungjin steeled his heart. This was the last time when he was going to be manipulated by the system. Starting with next raid, he will freely travel between dimensions.

‘Ding!’

The elevator bell rang as the door slid open. This was the fifth floor; the final level. In front of them, stood a well-dressed Count Dimitri waiting.

[Warning!]

[Boss Monster ‘Thousand Year Count’ Dimitri has appeared!]

- Ability and item name from the game called “Kingdom of the Winds”, by Nexon (which is more than 20 years old now)

- Reference to Hanzo from Overwatch. (lots of Koreans complain that the one and only archer in Overwatch is a Japanese man, despite Koreans having far more legendary archers throughout history.)

부익부 빈익빈 富益富 貧益貧 – Literal Translation is ‘Wealth brings more wealth, Poverty brings more Poverty. Somewhat philosophical. Those who are rich know how to make money and do what is necessary to improve continuously, those who are poor do not know how to make money and do not do what is necessary to improve falling behind further and further.

Chapter 049 – Count Dimitri’s Castle Ruins

(5)

Count Dimitri waited for them, dressed up in a fancy suit. And like before, he greeted them in an overly polite manner.

“Congratulations for making it to the top. Did you enjoy the recreation I had prepared for you?”

Sungjin didn’t have time for idle chat.

“Pa!”

He threw the Blood Vengeance towards the Count. It was thrown right on target, but once it almost reached the Count, he burst into a cloud of bats and dodged the sword.

He could hear the Count’s annoying laughter from the swarm of bats.

“Hahahahaha~”

“Haa!”

Sungjin recalled the Blood Vengeance. The bats flew towards the podium and reformed into a human shape. The Count grinned mischievously as he commented,

“My my how eager... It seems as though my servants weren’t able to provide a satisfactory entertainment for you all.”

The Count drew his Rapier.

“Then as the Master, I will be personally entertaining you all.”

Count Dimitri was a difficult boss to defeat. The annoying bat transformation, his immense speed, ability to cast magic, highly intelligent and the blood sucking ability.

If he manages to grab one of the teammates even once, he becomes fully healed and empowered.

Sungjin had to kill him before he had a chance to bite one of his teammates.

So he charged towards the Count brandishing his two legendary swords. Count Dimitri waited for Sungjin to approach with his Rapier.

The Count must have thought he could contest Sungjin with his Rapier. But for the first time, the Count’s confident smile crumbled.

‘Clang clang!’

In just two strikes, the Rapier was knocked out of his hands. He took a step back with eyes wide open.

‘I won’t let you escape’

Sungjin prepared his sword and slashed at the Count. But the feedback on the sword felt strange.

‘Bang’

Along with the sound, the Count turned into bats and flew away. Meanwhile, the Count shouted an incantation.

“What is real is fake and what is fake is real! Illusion!”

Suddenly the swarm of bats multiplied. They flew higher into the air, before splitting into four parts and landing on four corners of the room. The four swarms assumed human forms once more. There were four Counts now.

The others fell into a panic. Sungjin first returned to the group of hunters; it would be annoying if one of them were bit. Sungjin addressed the team.

“Damage dealers, it’s nice if you can attack, but it is more important to avoid being bitten. Especially Giovanni, please stick close to the team and protect them.”

“Got it.”

“Soldamyr, do you have magic that can be used to differentiate the real from the illusions?”

“You can always set it on fire to see if it turns to ash.”

“Ah... right...”

Sungjin’s reply was thick with disappointment. Soldamyr bowed his head to apologize.

“I apologize, for not being able to use White Magic...”

“No, it’s fine. Just pick one of them on the right side and fire a spell at it.”

“It will be done, Master.”

Sungjin looked down next and spoke.

“Cain, you take the one on the left. I’ll ring the bell.”

“Woof.”

“Finally... everyone else, please cooperate against that one back there.”

“Ok.”

The four hunters answered together.

Once Sungjin was done giving out instructions, he counted down.

“3, 2, 1, let’s go!”

Sungjin took out the ‘Manyata’ from his pocket and rang it as he charged towards the Count. He didn’t know if this was an illusion

“Incinerate everything in your path! Fireball!”

Soldamyr shouted an incantation.

“Grrr!”

Cain snarled as he flung himself at the Count.

“Taho!”

Mahadas charged in with a shout. Sungjin slashed at the Count. The Count seemed to shrivel, then fell apart in half before disappearing.

‘Illusion! Which one is real?’

Sungjin looked around. Soldamyr shook his head. Cain was also left alone in his corner. The only one remaining was the one behind the others. The four of them were all looking up towards the ceiling.

Sungjin followed their gaze and found the Count hovering over them; He was reciting an incantation.

“Steel-cutting Blades of Wind! Wind Cutter!”

Several green blades appeared at the end of his fingers and flew towards the hunters.

“Get behind me!”

Giovani raised his shield and tried to protect the hunters behind him, but he wasn’t fast enough.

‘Pi pi pit!’

Several blades were blocked by the shield, but others found their mark on Peng Long.

“Ugh...”

The magical blades cut through his armor and left an injury. Sungjin ran towards the last remaining Count, but he rose back in the air and

“What is real is fake and what is fake is real! Illusion!”

Cast his spell and split apart again.

“Grrr...”

Sungjin grounded his teeth. The Count was an irritating enemy to fight. The other hunters gathered up without having to be told by Sungjin. Even one victim could restore and empower the Count.

The Count finished splitting into four again.

“Master, the time has run out.”

“Woof! Woof woof!”

His two summons announced their time was over.

‘Ah...’

10 minutes must have elapsed since their summon. Cain returned to his wooden form, and Soldamyr returned to his lamp. The options have shrunk now.

‘Mahadas, take the left, Dominic take the right, Giovani and Peng Long take the one in the back’

Would have been great to be able to say, but if even one person gets bitten, the situation could only grow worse. Sungjin decided to change his mind.

He was feeling rushed due to Dominic’s condition, but he decided to take it cautiously and take this situation calmly.

‘I feel sorry for Dominic, but I’ll have to take my time and handle all four on my own.’

Trying to rush this one though could cause an unintended casualty. Sungjin made up his mind and was about to jump into action when he noticed blood.

He saw drops of blood in the room. It wasn’t splattered all over the room, only in certain locations.

‘Where did it come from?’

Sungjin searched his memories. The first time he faced the Count, he had thought that his sword brushed up against something. The Count could have been injured at that time. No, he must have been injured by that strike.

All the illusions had a cut on their left arm. And there was only one which still had blood dripping from it.

‘That must be the real body.’

Sungjin whispered to Peng Long who stood next to him.

“Peng, blood.”

Peng Long understood him with just those two words. Sungjin charged at him right away. Unlike last time, it seemed to have been taken aback.

The Count recited an incantation.

“Stiff muscles and cramped legs, Slow!”

Sungjin’s movements slowed down slightly, and the Count immediately retreated into the air and turned into bats..

“Illusion”

He didn’t seem to understand how Sungjin was able to tell the fake. Even after the bats split into four, one of the swarm was still dripping blood.

“Peng!”

Sungjin shouted despite being slowed down.

Peng drew his arrows and yelled.

“Split Arrows!”

His arrow flew straight and true. It landed on one of the bats of the swarm, and many magical arrows appeared nearby piercing all the bats around it. His skill landed dead on.

Sungjin ran through the dead bats falling out of the air and returned the Moon Specter back into the sheath. The moment he saw the bats resume human form he yelled

“Deathly Wail!”

“KYAAAAAAA”

For a moment, the Vampire let out a cry of agony matching the tune of the screech of Sungjin’s skill.

*

Giovani just barely regained his sanity after a few moments of trembling in fear. He was slightly embarrassed, but the feeling went away quickly.

“D...Die!” Dominic was stabbing his spear in the air while hallucinating.

“Eeek!”

Peng Long was running amok in the distance. Mahadas had his eyes closed in meditation. Giovanni scanned his surroundings to search for the Vampire and Kei.

But the Operator gave an announcement.

[Boss ‘Count Dimitri’ Cleared!]

[Returning to the Black Market in 1 hour 2 minutes and 45 seconds.]

He saw in the distance Kei swinging his swords to shake the blood off of the blades before returning them to his sheath. Giovanni saw the Count’s beheaded corpse lying at Kei’s feet. He breathed a sigh of relief.

But Kei came up to him and said

“Let’s go. 15 minutes have passed until now... so we should have close to 15 minutes remaining. There isn’t much time to waste.”

Giovani was surprised at his words. Dominic's complexion continued to grow paler, so something had to be done. But he still had a question.

“But... where are we going?”

To that Kei replied

“Ah, that’s right.”

Kei clapped once when he realized something and turned to speak to the Operator.

“Operator, I’ll use the Treasure Hunter active once. Please give me a hint about a secret place or a hidden boss.”

[I will first inform you about the secret place in the map.]

“What is...?”

Giovani began to ask, but Sungjin cut him off and put his finger on his lips.

“Shh...”

The Operator began to speak in a similar manner to how she gives warnings.

[A wandering merchant from lands afar,
[Climbed the mountain carrying his treasure.]

[Finding a castle, he celebrated in joy;]

[‘Master of that castle will pay for my treasures’.]

[But the only thing awaiting him at the old castle]

[Were grotesque monsters and beasts, so he ran.]

[But he was soon caught and turned into a cocoon.]

The Operator’s explanation ended, and Giovanni turned to look at Kei with more questions than before. But then Kei suddenly began to talk to himself.

“Wandering Merchant from afar... Turned into a cocoon...”

He muttered. Then he opened his eyes wide and began to walk towards the door.

“Let’s go!”

Everyone was completely out of it. But they didn’t have a choice but to listen to him. The hunters all took their spot in the elevator, and it began to move again.

“Clang Clang Clang Clang”

The elevator noisily made its way down. Meanwhile, Mahadas who had been quiet until now respectfully raised a question.

“Excuse me, but... what is it that you are trying to accomplish?”

Kei answered his question.

“Ah... This is a type of side quest which gives you a treasure as a reward.”

“Treasure?”

Peng Long showed heightened interest at his words.

“Yes. You’ll see when you get there. I think you all are very lucky. That guy... his personality is a bit... well, it should prove to be helpful.”

Giovani then turned to ask a question.

“What do you mean by helpful?”

Instead of answering the question, Kei said something else while drumming his fingers over his lips.

“You were all worried about getting low contribution points this round, right?”

Giovani, Peng Long, and Dominic all flinched. It was a sore topic to all of them. Kei continued to speak.

“The guy we’re about to meet will make you all a great deal. All of you should be able to get something good out of this.”

Kei continued to speak around the topic.

“Treasure is treasure, and a deal is a deal... but what’s going to happen to me?”

Dominic asked. Kei glanced at him.

“Ah... Now that you mention it... it might get solved rather easily...”

Dominic tilted his head in confusion.

“What do you...?”

At that moment

‘Ding!’

The elevator Rang and they returned to the 4th floor at the Frankenstein’s Monster’s room. In order to go down, they had to cross the room to the other Elevator on the other side. Kei quickly made his way across the room as he spoke.

“Please quickly follow me. And trust me, you won’t regret it.”

Giovani remained curious about what he meant.

“Where are we going anyway?”

Kei answered.

“She said Cocoon earlier right? We’re going to the Spider’s room on the 2nd Floor”

Chapter 050 – Count Dimitri’s Castle Ruins

(6)

‘Ding!’

Along with the sound of the bell, the five hunters arrived on the 2nd floor. The room still smelled of burning flesh. Sungjin took the lead and surveyed the room.

“Everyone, please search for a cocoon. There should be one hidden away somewhere around here.”

The four hunters began searching the surroundings. This was their first time looking carefully around the castle.

They weren’t able to earlier due to the time limit.

‘Cocoon... where could it be?’

Sungjin used the Blood Vengeance and the Moon Specter as a prod to check areas covered by spider webs. But there weren’t very many spots left. Spider webs were very flammable, and the entire room had been lit at some point.

‘Eternal Flames of Hell! Inferno!’

The spell Soldamyr had cast a few minutes ago was mighty to behold. It had caused collateral damage far exceeding what is

possible with Fire Ball; It had turned the entire room into a scene from hell. Sungjin was worried.

‘Did... we accidentally kill him?’

Sungjin combed the whole floor, praying that he was wrong. Finally, Giovanni called out to the others.

“Hey guys, look here!”

Everyone rushed to his side to see what he had found. He had found a small waterway. A small gap was put in between the stone to allow the water to flow freely.

The waterway flowed across the room and was designed to drain out of the room through a dark opening blocked by vertical metal bars.

“Operator, Lantern”

Peng Long took out the lantern from the cube and checked inside the opening. Sungjin recalled the small sewer he saw while chasing the Count’s bats.

“Sewer...”

“Please move aside.”

Sungjin pushed the others aside and used his two swords to slice open the metal bars of the waterway.

‘Cling clang’

Once the bars were removed, Sungjin made his way through the opening. The others followed suit.

The interior of the sewer was larger than expected. There was not a single drop of water on the walls or ceiling, only sticky webs. There were more webs the further they went in. It was an uncomfortable place, where invisible sticky webs would adhere to the face. But this gave Sungjin a sense of certainty.

‘This is it. We found it.’

The webs continued to get thicker and thicker. Sungjin had to use his swords to cut open a path and continued inwards. And deep within the webs was a gigantic cocoon.

It was a little smaller than a human being, but it matched the mental image of the Merchant he had in mind.

‘It’s most definitely that guy from before.’

Sungjin grinned as he cut open the Cocoon. Inside was an unconscious Ratman. The operator gave an announcement.



[Congratulations.]

[You have discovered the Hidden Merchant 'Ruff Han'.]

‘A rat found in a sewer... How fitting.’

While Sungjin was thinking so in his mind, the other four hunters were surprised.

“Hidden Merchant?”

“Is it talking about the Ratman over there?”

Sungjin slapped Ruff Han across his cheeks twice. Not enough to hurt, but enough to snap the ratman awake. Ruff Han blinked twice as he woke up.

“Ugh... No. Nooo!”

Ruff Han began to scream as if having a nightmare. He then turned towards Sungjin and stammered.

“What? How did you... where... What about the spiders?”

Sungjin ignored him and said

“This is the second time I have saved your life. There are no more spiders. Now hand over the ‘good stuff’ you promised me last time.”

Ruff Han blinked a few more times. He looked at Sungjin, and also at the other hunters present.

“Ah... So that’s how it is. Well, Thank you, since you did save me...”

And then he turned around. There was a smaller Cocoon behind him. He ran up to the little Cocoon and gnawed away at the spider web there. Within the Cocoon was a cube that was a little different from the ones that followed the Hunters.

He lifted that up and said

“Well then... As a reward for saving my life, I will sell an item to each of you. Of course, it will be much cheaper than the prices you’d get in the Black Market. But, since this is a special discount, you can only buy one item each. Got it?”

Once he was done explaining, he began to take out items from the cube one by one. The hunters concentrated on the merchant’s hands. He took out a large variety of goods.

Gloves, shoulder pads, shoes, helm, necklaces, staves, axes, swords...the hunters picked them up one by one to check the specs. Peng Long was the first to find an item he liked.

Kaodum -Shooting Gloves of the ‘Hunter of the Dark’

Heroic Gloves Defense 10%

Passive Skill

Focus Fire(III) – Each third hit against the same target deals 300% of the normal damage.

Legendary Hunter of the Dark ‘Vyen’s’ Shooting Gloves.

It is said that her hands never wavered while aiming an arrow towards her enemies.

“How much is this?”

“Ah, that’s worth 4400 coins in the Black Market. But I will sell it for 1600 coins, which is less than half that price.”

Everyone turned to stare at their conversation.

“Please let me get this. Operator, check out please.”

Ruff Han and Peng Long put their cubes together.

“Alright, Transaction complete.”

Ruff Han handed over the Archery Shooting Gloves. Peng Long received it and said

“Equip”

Once the gloves appeared on his hands, Peng Long smiled. He must have liked the gloves a lot. After all, he did just buy a heroic tier item for the low price of 1600 coins.

“Then we’re done with the archer... Anyone else?”

Giovani and Mahadas began looking earnestly through the items in front of them. The only ones who didn’t get into the shopping mood were Sungjin and Dominic. Sungjin had a good reason. In order to buy the item from ‘Darker than Black’, he had to save his coins.

Dominic just waited slightly off to the side. He just wanted the shopping to be over quickly. It was understandable.

Each moment the others spent shopping was cutting away at his remaining life. Sungjin glanced at Dominic before asking Ruff Han.

“Hey, do you have any item that can remove Curses?”

Ruff Han responded

“Ah... if you need curse removal...”

He rummaged through his rucksack. From within, he pulled out a luxurious necklace with a white diamond centerpiece.

Innocence – Angel’s Blessings

Heroic Necklace

Passive Skill

Magic Defense(II) – Receive 20% reduced damage from all sources of magic.

Active Skill

Purify(V) – Curses, fears, petrification and all forms of status effects and debuffs are removed. Cooldown 10 minutes.

Snakes avoid those with Angelic innocence

“But this is a little expensive. It’s almost Legendary tier item among the Heroic Tier. I assure you that this is a very good item.”

Sungjin nodded. 5th tier active, and an excellent passive. If anyone had no choice other than to buy it, it was Dominic Spencer.

“So how much is it?”

“2600. This is worth 6300 coins at the Black market.”

The item was being offered at nearly a third of the original price. Sungjin had thought that Dominic would buy it without hesitation. 2600 coins were a cheap price to pay for one’s life. But Dominic hesitated.

“...2600...”

Sungjin asked

“What’s wrong?”

Dominic answered.

“To tell you the truth... I don’t have enough money. 2600 coins...”

Everyone turned to look at him. Dominic lifted up his spear as he continued.

“This spear... I had been saving up for it and bought it as soon as I could afford it. It took almost everything I had earned so far to buy it. So... I am now left with only 1800 coins...”

Everyone froze. Sungjin quickly thought about it in his head.

‘2600... I have that right now but...’

Sungjin couldn’t afford to spare his coins right now. The Item he needed to buy from ‘Darker than Black’ would likely need all the coins he had currently plus most of what he would receive from the end of this Raid.

The Item was not a bad one by any means, but Sungjin already had the ‘Basilisk’s Eye’. ‘Innocence’ was not good enough to justify swapping Basilisk’s eye for it. Sungjin glanced at the others.

It was then that Mahadas spoke up.

“I will buy the item then.”

Everyone turned to look at him.

“This ‘Purify’ Skill, can it be used on others?”

Ruff Han nodded and answered his question.

“Of course.”

“Then please allow me to purchase it. I will pay 2600 Coins.”

The transaction was over quickly. Once Mahadas equipped the necklace, he placed his hands on Dominic’s forehead and said

“Purify.”

The Diamond necklace glowed for a moment and the hand touching Dominic’s forehead began to glow as well.

It was an extremely fitting image; a monk with his hands basked in purifying white light, healing another.

“Ooh”

Peng Long and Giovanni couldn't help but exclaim at the sight and watched with their mouths open.

But instead of Dominic or the hand, Sungjin was staring at Mahadas.

‘... Skilled...does not hesitate to sacrifice self to help others.’

Color returned to Dominic's face. The ‘Vampire's Blood Curse’ had been lifted. Dominic faced Mahadas and Sungjin and knelt on his feet; he put his hands on the ground and bowed deeply in the eastern style.

“Mahadas and Kei, both of you have saved my life. I vow to repay this debt someday.”

Sungjin indifferently received the thanks.

“Sure.”

To be honest, he didn't think it was possible for Dominic to ever repay him in any form. Mahadas gathered his hands respectfully, befitting that of his status as a monk, and replied magnanimously.

“It was no big thing. If you truly wish to repay me, then please, do an act of kindness for others. I would be satisfied with just

that.”

Dominic was now no longer under a time constraint, so the group no longer needed to rush. 1 hour was plenty of time to search for and kill the hidden boss. The shopping continued.

Giovani was torn between buying a pair of steel greaves versus a silver axe and finally decided on the former. It was the type of greaves that fired rockets to allow long distance jumps.

‘It can be used to escape when surrounded by enemies, or rush to an ally’s aid when they’re in danger.’

Ruff Han’s sales pitch won him over immediately. Dominic asked for and bought a ring worth exactly 1800 coins.

Although the ring didn’t provide nearly as much protection from spells as Mahadas’s ‘Innocence’, it was better than nothing.

In the end, the only person who did not buy anything was Sungjin. Before he closed up shop, Ruff Han offered him an item.

“Although you think poorly of me, I do have to repay my debts... so here you go.”

He muttered as he pulled out an item from his bag. What he handed over was not an item per se, but a ‘Mystery Pouch’.

“Someone completed ‘Ancient Stories from the East’, so the net worth has gone down a bit, but... I guess if you get one of the ‘East’ components, you can consider it to be a ‘bust’.

Ruff Han returned all the display items back into his sack and then stood on all fours.

“Then until next time! If there is another!”

He disappeared into the sewers.

Most likely a reference to Vayne, the League of Legends Champion.

Chapter 051 – Count Dimitri’s Castle Ruins

(7)

Once ‘Wandering Merchant’ Ruff Han ran away, the Hunters left the smelly sewer and returned to the 2nd floor room.

Giovani, who was first to leave the sewer, found a spot without webs to sit and took off his helm.

“Whew... I guess this chapter is pretty much done.”

Peng Long caressed the Archery shooting gloves as he replied

“It was hectic for a while, but there were no casualties. Everything turned out okay in the end.”

Dominic Spencer thanked the remaining two hunters as well.

“I am sorry... my rash action inconvenienced you two as well.”

The men shook their head and denied being troubled.

“No, it wasn’t bad at all.”

“All’s well that ends well.”

Sungjin was last to climb out of the sewers and briefly stared at the men conversing with one another. It was a rather heartwarming moment. But it wasn't over yet; there was still the hidden boss remaining.

Sungjin first placed the 'Mystery Pouch' in the cube before addressing the other hunters.

"Excuse me, sorry to bother you all while you are resting. But there is one more hidden element remaining in this raid."

Everyone turned to stare at him.

"It's called 'hidden boss'... as the name would suggest, it is a secondary boss hidden somewhere on the map. I am planning on going back to search for it. Does anyone want to come with me?"

Giovani asked in response.

"Hidden boss?"

"Yes. Hidden bosses are stronger than regular Raid bosses. It should be hidden in the castle somewhere."

"But... is there a point to seeking it out?"

Sungjin answered simply

“Killing the Hidden boss grants bonus points and coins for everyone. Also, it increases contribution level.”

The other Hunters looked among themselves. They were greatly benefited by ‘Wandering Merchant Ruff Han’, but their contribution levels were still extremely low. Peng Long asked Sungjin,

“So... is our help necessary?”

Sungjin shook his head.

“No, it isn’t necessary; I should be able to beat it alone. That being said, I am not going to refuse if anyone decides to help...”

Sungjin dragged out the last word before he continued.

“Hidden bosses are typically extremely dangerous, and so I can’t guarantee your safety. I don’t know how it looks like or how it attacks; I don’t know anything about it.”

Sungjin’s words made all the hunters pause to reconsider. It wasn’t an exaggeration to call ‘Hidden bosses’ a gamble on your life. Sungjin spread his arms wide as he said

“Feel free to act as you please. You are under no obligation to

help out. Even though it'll be tricky, I can manage alone. If you decide not to help out, you can stay far away in case I die.”

Mahadas moved closer and said

“I have decided to tackle any challenge that comes my way. I don’t understand what is the point of these raids... but through fighting, it could lead to some sort of revelation.”

Sungjin nodded. A fighter at his skill level would not become a hindrance. Peng Long raised his hands.

“Aye. I shall come as well. Supporting from a distance can’t hurt.”

He was right, it wouldn’t be bad at all. If he kept a good distance and attacked from afar, Peng Long had very little to be afraid of. The ones who would have trouble were the tank and the melee dps, Giovanni and Dominic.

Giovanni wasn’t happy about the prospect of facing a second boss. His facial expressions screamed ‘Why not just go to the Black Market as is?’

Dominic seemed without enthusiasm, probably due to his near death experience. Sungjin addressed the two men.

“The two of you are welcome to stay behind and rest here. The other two, follow me please.”

But Dominic picked up his spear and replied.

“No, I owe my life to both of you. If I could be of even a little bit of assistance, I will gladly do it.”

Since Dominic declared his intentions to go along, Giovanni must have felt nervous about staying behind.

“Well, I’ll go along as well. I don’t know about combat, but if it’s just helping to find something...”

And so, for the first time since the restart, all five hunters left together to hunt the hidden boss. Sungjin addressed a question to the cube.

“Operator, I want to use the Treasure Hunter active. Tell me the clue to find the Hidden Boss.”

The Operator recited the second hint.

[Loyal Knight of the count]
[renowned on the battlefield]
[betrayed and beheaded]
[not even death broke his will.]
[unwilling to let go of the reins]
[he circles the castle, searching]
[to find his head and return to battle]

Sungjin looked around at the other hunters after hearing the hint. Everyone looked confused. Sungjin gave a request to the Operator.

“Operator, one more time.”

The Operator repeated the hint, and once again the hunters all contemplated the meaning.

“Beheaded...”

Giovani was first to speak.

“So it’s something of a headless ghost?”

Peng Long replied.

“I feel that ‘unwilling to let go of the reins’ is the key.”

Mahadas gave his thoughts.

“Circling the castle... isn’t that the most important part?”

After listening to all the hunters’ thoughts on the matter, Sungjin responded as well.

“In that case, should we take a look around the castle?”

“Yes, lets.”

Once the men came to a conclusion, they took the elevators back down to the ground level. All the Vampires who were dancing in the hall had already turned to ash.

The hunters walked past the ashes and came back outside. Once they passed the two zombie dogs laying outside, everyone suddenly remembered something.

“Headless coachman!”

Giovani was first to yell it out.

“Ah, you’re right!”

Dominic shouted out in agreement. The five hunters cautiously exited the castle gates. The carriages were still standing in the same spot where they had left them.

There was a horse-drawn carriage which had brought them to the castle at the beginning. The hunters slowly approached the carriage.

‘Purururu’

A horse stood in place breathing out mist in the cold night air, and a coachman was sitting on the carriage still holding the reins.

“Hold on.”

Sungjin had the hunters wait behind him. He pulled out his two swords and approached the coachman. The headless coachman did not respond.

Sungjin was about to try poking the coachman’s arm with the ‘Moon Specter’, but the Operator gave a warning.

[Warning.]

Sungjin took a step back and prepared for battle.

[Attacking a non-hostile lifeform will cause penalties from the Raid Rewards.]

It was a different warning message than what he was expecting. It was just like the time he was trying to fight ‘Wandering Merchant Aindell’.

‘Are we wrong?’

Sungjin began to doubt himself. But he then heard a droning voice.

“Sir Hunter?”

He was missing his neck, but Sungjin could hear someone speaking from the general direction of the coachman. It was a voice of a ghost. While Sungjin stiffened up, the headless coachman asked

“Did you kill Count Dimitri?”

Sungjin answered him honestly.

“Yes, I beheaded him...”

The otherworldly creature before him laughed happily.

“Beheaded... Ka hahaha! So in the end... just like me...”

‘Betrayed and beheaded’

He had the same background story as the hint; in other words, he was most definitely the hidden boss. Only, that it was unclear how to stop him from being non-threatening.

Sungjin wasn't sure what to say to the coachman, so he stared at him. But it was the coachman who asked him the question.

“Excuse me but... did you happen to see my head in the castle? Please find my head. I cannot return to the battlefield without my head...”

“Ah, got it.”

Sungjin returned to the other hunters after receiving the hint.

“Everyone, did you notice any heads inside the castle? A severed head?”

Everyone shook their head.

“Anywhere where they might have preserved a severed head?”

Giovani slapped his knees and replied.

“Now that you're asking, remember the 3rd floor? All of those suits of armors? What if the head was hidden in one of them?”

Everyone nodded at his suggestion. The full plates of armors were more than enough as hidden places, and indeed the hunters have not searched through them.

It wouldn't be strange if one of the helms held a severed head. The hunters returned to the castle ruins.

With the exception of Mahadas, the other three hunters didn't look very happy. Having to repeatedly search the castle was probably bothering them.

Regardless of how they felt, the Hunters rode the elevator back to the 3rd floor, the floor full of suits of armors.

“Let's split up and search through the fallen helms.”

Everyone began looking for helms for a severed head.

“All empty here.”

“Here as well.”

“All empty.”

There were no results. Every helm was searched through, but not so much as a hair was found. Sungjin cradled his head and thought carefully.

“Head... Severed head...”

No matter how hard he thought, this room wasn't it. There was

no head.

‘1st floor were filled with Vampires who turned to ash after being beheaded... 5th floor only had the Count. 2nd floor had spiders, 3rd had Suits of armor, and the 4th floor only has Frankenstein’s monster...’

Sungjin paused. A thought occurred to him.

‘Frankenstein’s Monster’s head.’

Frankenstein’s Monster was basically a flesh golem created by stitching together corpses and parts of several people. Sungjin called together the hunters.

“Please follow me.”

He led the hunters to the elevator and returned to the 4th floor. He inspected the Frankenstein’s monster they had defeated earlier.

He pulled down the shirt of the monster and saw that the neck was stitched onto the body. Upon close inspection, the color of the skin where the neck was stitched to was different than the rest of the body.

It was gruesome, but it wasn’t the right time to be creeped out.

‘Woosh’

Sungjin sliced off the stitches in one swing and beheaded the monster. He held the head and returned to the Elevator where the other hunters waited. Happy for finding the key to the Hidden boss, Sungjin smiled.

The hunters stared at him with distaste. ‘I thought he was an oddball but good at heart... but he’s actually just a weirdo after all!’ they probably thought of him. Sungjin didn’t care.

Once the Hunters returned to the 1st floor, Sungjin stood in front of the castle gates. He turned around for a moment and addressed the others.

“Please prepare yourselves. Those of you who don’t want to participate should return first to the 1st floor.”

Once he was done, Sungjin took the head to meet the headless coachman.

“Excuse me, but is this...”

Before Sungjin was even done speaking, the ghost of the headless coachman shouted

“Yes! That’s it! My head! Quickly! Return it to me!”

Sungjin held the Moon Specter with his right as he returned the

head to the coachman.

Once the coachman was reunited with his head, he didn't immediately stick it back on his body, but held it his hands and laughed loudly.

“Ahahahahaha! My head! MY HEAD!”

His head emitted green light, and the laughter started to come from the head instead.

“Ahahaha! Come! To battle!”

The Headless Coachman held his head in one hand and pulled out a longsword hidden on the horse, and destroyed the carriage in a single blow.

Sungjin put his left hand inside his vest upon witnessing the coachman's actions. He was preparing to use the 'Romance of the Three Kingdoms'. The Operator gave out a warning.

[Warning! Hidden Boss]

[Dullahan Knight 'Besgoro' has appeared!]

Chapter 052 – Count Dimitri’s Castle Ruins

(8)

As soon as the Hidden boss Dullahan appeared, Sungjin deployed the ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’. There was no need to drag on the fight. The content of the book revealed itself.

Sungjin wasted no time reading it out loud.

“When the Minister of the State, Dong Zhuo, decided to take her to the Mei Citadel,”

It was then

“Let us go, my steed! Shadow Run!”

The Knight shouted

“Hee!~”

The horse stood up on its hind legs and let out a mighty cry that reverberated in the surrounding.

“She intentionally...”

Sungjin was forced to pause while reciting the verses from the book. When he was interrupted, the book automatically closed itself.

‘Damn!’

‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’ returned to the front covers, and Sungjin looked back towards the Dullahan. The Dullahan was rapidly riding into the distance at an unbelievable speed. Sungjin quickly shouted

“Swift Paw!”

The claws emerged from his boots and he sprinted. But, although he was running at 10 times his normal speed, Sungjin was unable to close the distance.

Swift Paw’s active period lasted just 10 seconds, but the Dullahan continued to speed away.

‘What the... how the hell am I supposed to catch up to this guy?’

Sungjin checked ahead and saw that the path was curved slightly to the left.

‘Wait...’

Sungjin stopped running and pulled out the Magic Carpet.

“Flight.”

He soared into the sky and checked where the Dullahan was running off to. As he thought; the knight was running in a huge circle, with the castle as the center.

Count Dimitri’s castle was quite large, but due to the Dullahan’s speed, the Knight was finishing up the first lap around the castle in a very short time.

The Hunters were standing around at the entrance with their weapons in hand, lost as to what they should be doing.

“Where did that thing go, Kei?”

Sungjin explained as he returned to the hunters.

“He’s coming back. He’s running a lap around the castle.”

And just like he said, the Dullahan came into view from the other side of the castle. Sungjin took out the ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’ again.

But the book stubbornly refused to open; as if secured by chains and locks. The Operator gave an announcement.

[5 seconds remaining until ‘Declamation’ is available off cool down]

‘What?’

The Dullahan’s head shouted, interrupting his thoughts.

“Soldiers! To me!”

At his command, dozens of ghost cavalrymen appeared behind him. Each of the ghost soldiers held a weapon while riding a horse. One of the hunters muttered.

“My god...”

Sungjin put the book away and returned to the inside of the castle gates. Standing directly in the way of the galloping cavalry

could only result in death.

“Ahahaha! Cowards! Attack! Go bring me their heads!”

The Dullahan Knight issued orders to his soldiers. Soon, the ghost horsemen entered the castle walls. The Hunters, waiting inside, met them head on.

“Come at me, monsters!”

Giovani shouted raising his shield.

“Yaa!”

Dominic braced his spear with courage.

“Taho!”

Mahadas punched the head of the oncoming horse.

“Pew~”

Peng Long wordlessly let loose bolts at the oncoming cavalry. Sungjin also faced off against a horseman. It came charging straight at Sungjin with a lance.

But it was no match for Sungjin.

‘Woosh’

In one strike, both the horseman and the horse’s head were severed. The horse continued forward, and ran into the wall, scattering into dust.

Sungjin scanned the surroundings for the Dullahan, but he could not find him. Only a small portion of the cavalry had entered the castle gates.

While the other four hunters were fighting against the cavalry army, Sungjin used the Magic Carpet to fly into the air. He saw the Dullahan Knight running in the distance, drawing the same circle around the castle.

Sungjin concluded that the main body of the army does not enter the gates. Returning to the gates once more, he prepared the ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’ again.

‘I will do it this time.’

Sungjin began reading the words. It was different from last time. But he didn’t have time to ponder the reason; the ghost cavalry army was almost upon him.

“As Cao Cao asked, those from Heibei are not used to Naval combat; riding ships gave them sea sickness. Is there anything we can do to solve this problem? To this, he answered, if you tie the

boats together, it will reduce the shaking and be just like walking on land.”

As Sungjin calmly read out the verses, the cavalry grew ever closer; He was moments away from becoming a pancake.

But Sungjin decided to trust the book and continued to read the verses until the end.

“Cao Cao slapped his knees and shouted, You are the answer to my prayers, Pang Tong!”

Once Sungjin was done with the declamation, the book automatically closed itself and returned to his embrace. The Operator gave an announcement.

[Seance of Pang Tong Activated!]

[Passive Skill Rapid Cast (IV) and Increase Mana (II) enabled]

[Active ability Link Trap (I) is available for instant cast]

Sungjin lost no time immediately casting the active skill. There was no doubt this hero was chosen for this very reason.

“Link Trap!”

Chains appeared before the cavalry army, and their speed visibly

fell; from the speed of a runaway train to that of a crawling baby.

Sungjin rode the Magic Carpet and rose into the air. There were lots of enemies and the point of a 'Strategist' was to cast magic.

Once he climbed high enough, Sungjin recited an incantation.

"Incinerate every..."

But a ball of fire already gathered in his hands. It was the effect of 'Rapid Cast'. Sungjin immediately understood and acted accordingly; He began rapid firing spells alternating his hands.

"Fire ball!"

"Fire ball!!"

"Fire ball!!!"

"Fire ball!!!!"

"Fire ball!!!!!"

"Fire ball!!!!!!"

Once he fired six fireballs, the Operator gave a warning message.

[Low Mana]

Sungjin finally stayed his hands from firing another shot. The ghost cavalry was nearly stuck in place, moving at a snail crawl speed.

‘Boom Boom Boom BOOOM Rumble RUMBLE’

Six balls of fire landed on the ground, and the Ghost army was reduced to ashes. The only thing standing after the fires had subsided was the Dullahan Knight.

[10 seconds until the end of Seance. 9,]

The Operator began a countdown, but it didn’t matter. Sungjin pulled out his two swords and hopped out of the Magic Carpet.

The Dullahan moved the hand holding his head to look back and forth. The head emitted green flames as he cried out loud

“How can this be! My cavalry! You Knave!”

The Dullahan Knight swung his sword towards the approaching

Sungjin, but the Link Trap dulled his movement.

Sungjin easily dodged the blow and used Moon Specter to sever the hand holding the head and Blood Vengeance to sever the head of the horse 'Shadowrun'.

“Ahh...”

Shadowrun was beheaded and turned into dust. Only the one-armed Dullahan remained. He had no weapons nor a horse remaining.

Sungjin walked up to the knight to deliver the final blow. But green lights began to emit from the head, and he heard the head recite an incantation.

“Awaken and become my slave!”

From the first words, Sungjin knew what the knight was trying to do; He also had this spell memorized. The knight must have wanted to use the spell to resurrect his fallen soldiers.

Sungjin had no reason to allow him to finish his magic. Sungjin pointed at the knight with both of his hands

“Pa!”

His two swords flew out of his hands and cut away at the

remaining arm, and also his neck.

“Haa!”

Once the swords passed him, Sungjin cast the return spell. The swords sliced apart the head on its return trip and flew straight into his hands.

The Operator gave out an announcement.

[Hidden boss The Dullahan Knight]

[Besgoro cleared!]

Sungjin looked down at his swords. He was planning on swinging his swords in the air to remove the blood, but there was not a single blood stain on the blade.

‘I guess he was a ghost of sorts.’

Sungjin grinned as he sheathed his swords again. Every enemy had been killed. Sungjin was planning on returning to the other hunters’ side, but then he saw the others staring at him with mouths hanging open.

“Pang Tong... so you’re the Master Hunter? Kei?”

He couldn't deny it. 'Treasure Hunter' Sungjin raised his arms and answered

"I wasn't trying to hide it per se."

The hunters were unable to look away from Sungjin.

'How did he get so strong?'

'Magic... how did he rapid fire so many at once?'

'That book... how is 'Romance of the Three Kingdoms' obtained?'

Sungjin was considering how to respond to the others when he was interrupted by the Operator's announcement.

[All enemies slain.]

[Beginning reward distribution.]

Once reward was mentioned, the Hunters were finally distracted.

[Monsters Slain. Zombie Watchdogs: 2. Vampire Nobles: 20. Giant Spiders: 30. Living Armor: 15. Frankenstein's Monster: 1. Total 6000 points.]

[Boss Monster Slain: 'Thousand Year Count' Dimitri: 750 points.]

[Hidden Boss: 'The Dullahan Knight' Besgoro: 750 points.]

[Final Point count: 7500. Distributing points.]

First up was Dominic Spencer's reward. Due to being bitten by a Vampire from early on, he wasn't able to rack up many points.

[Your contribution is 3.0%. 225 Stat points, 225 Black Coins awarded. Raid Clear Bonus 2000 Stat points and 2000 Black Coins awarded. Distributing 2250 Stat points and 2250 Black Coins.]

It was a low amount, but he didn't look upset. He just considered himself lucky to be alive. Next up was Giovanni. Due to Sungjin and Mahadas's strength, he didn't get many opportunities to fight as a tank.

[Your contribution is 5.7%]

Next was Peng Long. Thanks to his long ranged attacks he received a similar contribution level as Mahadas.

[Your contribution is 8.2%.]

Mahadas excelled in attacks, but by using magic and items to support his team, he racked up lots of contribution points from this round.

[Your contribution is 12.2%.]

Last up was Sungjin.

[Your contribution is 70.9%. 5318 Stat points, 5318 Black Coins awarded. Raid Clear Bonus 2000 Stat points and 2000 Black Coins awarded. Item effect 'Additional 10% gained' activated. Distributing 7318 Stat points and 8050 Black Coins.]

'8050 Coins...'

Sungjin calculated quickly in his head. Even though he had allowed the other hunters to take a few contribution points away from him, he had enough money left to buy the item from 'Darker than Black.'

'That's good.'

While Sungjin was breathing a sigh of relief, the Operator

continued to speak.

[And now we will distribute the items.]

TL note: Romance of the Three Kingdoms references-

There are two very different but linked scenes mentioned in the text. First one is about Dong Zhuo and Diao Chan. Specifically, the scene where Diao Chan is taken to the Mei citadel (미오성).

Diao Chan is one of the most famous fictional characters that appeared in the Romance of the Three Kingdoms. To end the tyrannical rule of Dong Zhuo, which was destroying the Han Dynasty, Wang Yun asked his adopted daughter to create strife between Dong Zhuo and Lu Bu (Legendary warrior).

She is first betrothed to Lu Bu, who becomes entranced by her beauty, and then is introduced to Dong Zhuo, who immediately takes her away to Mei citadel; site of untold savagery and debauchery where Dong Zhuo kept his large harem. Lu Bu is outraged and later kills Dong Zhuo. This plan is called linked trap 연환계.

The text Sungjin actually finished reading out loud is the scene where Pang Tong tricks Cao Cao to use a flawed strategy.

Pang Tong, by this point, was already a world renowned

strategist and tactician. Pang Tong was working with Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang to bring down Cao Cao. Pretending to join Cao Cao as a strategist, Pang Tong gave Cao Cao the idea to tie boats together with steel chains so that the ships will stop rocking, and place the planks above the chains where the boat meets so that the men could freely run from one ship to another as if walking on land.

The idea worked. Soldiers no longer had sea sickness. However, it greatly slowed down the progress of the ships to a crawl, especially at bends.

Emboldened by the apparent success of chaining ships together, Cao Cao attacked deep into the Sun Quan territory where he was without cavalry support.

At night when winds were favorable, Zhuge Liang launched an attack with unmanned boats filled with oils and torches which lit the chained ships on fire upon impact. Unable to pull away due to chains and planks linking the ships together, the whole of Cao Cao's great fleet went up in flames, burning a large portion of his army alive, and drowning most of the survivors. Stranded in the marsh and river-filled Sun Territory without a proper navy nor seamen, Cao Cao was forced to retreat. This is the famous battle of Red Cliff.

Pang Tong's great strategy which led to Cao Cao's defeat at the battle of Red Cliff was called... Linked Trap 연환계.

The Author is doing 2 things. One, he's showing us that heroes may have overlapping special abilities. Two, he's showing off his incredible depth of knowledge and understanding of the text in

Romance of the Three Kingdoms. I knew of both of these events, but I did not realize they were called the same thing until I read this chapter.

Chapter 053 – Count Dimitri’s Castle Ruins

(9)

The Item rewards were next, starting with Dominic.

[Spider Silk Mantle]

[Recovery Potion – Medium x2]

Dominic, who didn’t previously have anything draped over his back, immediately equipped the mantle. It appeared to be at least ‘Rare’ tier, and he seemed to be satisfied with it. Next up was Giovanni.

[Vampire Slayer’s Axe]

[Recovery Potion – Medium x2]

He picked up the axe and muttered

“This is so much worse than my current Axe... time to sell...”

Next in line was Peng Long.

[Arugo – [Frankenstein’s Monster’s Ringer’s Solution](#)]

[Recovery Potion – Medium x2]

I know this is a mouthful, but “Frankenstein’s Monster” is the proper noun (proper name). So the correct sentence structure becomes (X)’s Ringer’s solution. Aka Frankenstein’s Monster’s Ringer’s Solution.

Ringer’s Solution is a real thing. It is a type of [IV \(intravenous\) drip](#).

Peng Long lifted up the item.

Arugo – Frankenstein’s Monster’s Ringer’s Solution

Heroic Belt – Defense 5%

Passive Skill

First Aid (I)

Once HP drops below 10%, the belt automatically injects recovery potion into the bloodstream.

Cooldown 20 Minutes

Ringer's Solution attached to Frankenstein's Monster. It is so large that it is the perfect size to be used as a belt on a human being.

It wasn't a bad item. Drinking recovery potion in the middle of combat was difficult to say the least. The health recovered by the automatic system could be the difference between life and death. But,

"Hmm... this is a tank item."

As Peng Long suspected, it was meant to be used by tanks.

"I'll just sell it at the auction."

As soon as he declared that, Giovanni immediately ran up to him.

"Peng, sell that to me!"

“You want to buy it? For how much?”

“Give me some discount. I spent a lot with the Ratman earlier and don’t have much left.”

“You just received the raid reward a moment ago!”

While the two men were haggling, the rewards moved onto Mahadas.

[Mahaeen – Frankenstein’s Monster’s hard flesh]

Heroic Shoulder pad – Defense 36%

Passive Skill

Living Skin(III)

Recover 2% of the total health per minute

Skin from Frankenstein's Monster's shoulder region.

It automatically regenerates upon taking damage.

Mahadas unhesitatingly equipped the item right away. The green skin from Frankenstein's Monster's shoulder wiggled its way under his clothes and made its way to the shoulders. It was great that the item was not visible from the outside.

Last was Sungjin's turn.

[Blood Sucker – Vampire's Ring]

[Besgoro – Dullahan's head]

[Shadowrun – Ghost stallion]

[Spellbook – Illusion]

[Recovery Potion – Medium x4]

Sungjin was reading the messages when the Operator gave out another announcement.

[Congratulations! You have obtained the legendary item 'Besgoro – Dullahan's head'!]

Sungjin picked up the items that fell before him. The first item to catch his eye was 'Besgoro – Dullahan's Head'.

It was a legendary item, but the skull emitting green flames was still a strange item to behold.

[Last but not the least, you will be awarded titles earned in the Raid.]

Everyone received one title each. The title Sungjin received was

[Summoner – Familiars summoned through 'Spiritual Link' will last 10 additional minutes longer.]

'So not having this title equipped means that the bonus is only 5 minutes.'

This title wasn't all that great for now, as it only granted an additional 5 minutes to Soldamyr and Cain's active time. It would probably be more useful once he was able to increase the number of summons available to him via Spiritual Link.

‘Well, there’s no downside to having more titles available to me...’

Sungjin checked the item he received, starting with the Besgoro’s head. The Operator opened up a status screen.

Besgoro – Dullahan’s head
Legendary Helm – Defense 70%

Passive Skill

Ghost Vision(IV) – Enables [low light vision](#).

Substitute Chanting(II) – Chants the incantation of the spell being thought of on behalf of the caster. Cooldown 1 minute

Chat(I) – consult Sir Besgoro, who has a wealth of knowledge from countless battles.

Active Skill

Frenzy(VI) – Increases attack speed by 10% for each hit against the enemy. 1 Minute duration, 20 minute cooldown.

Legendary Hero Besgoro was well renowned on the battlefield, but met a terrible end.

Whispers of his grudge can be heard from his head.

The raw actually says “able to see clearly (perfectly) in the dark. But I recalled that the author likes western style rpg (especially DnD) so I used the DnD terminology here. It is not dark vision since it doesn’t mean (not implied) he could see in pitch black darkness (perfect dark).

Sungjin frowned while reading the status screen.

“It’s a helm?!”

The skull was covered in green flames. And yet this ghastly thing was still considered a helm. The specs were undoubtedly good. High defense rating and great skills, both passives and active.

With the exception of ‘[Chat\(I\)](#)’. Sungjin swallowed once and said

The raw is closer to “gossip” or “Babble”... basically, it means useless talk.

“Equip”

The skull grew large enough to accommodate Sungjin's head and then jumped on top of his head. Once it was on, Sungjin's vision changed dramatically. Despite being dark out, he could see as clear as day.

‘So... This is ghost vision...’

Sungjin turned his head left and right. When he saw Dominic, Dominic jumped back in surprise.

“Wah!”

Sungjin felt the skull that was covering his head as he asked.

“Is it... weird?”

Dominic replied

“No... I mean... it’s intimidating rather than weird...”

Sungjin felt the skull that covered his head. Dominic was probably right. Suddenly, he heard a familiar voice from above.

‘Hmmm. Are you my new master?’

Sungjin looked up in surprise. But there was nothing there. But this time he heard the voice from behind.

‘Where are you looking? It is I! You are wearing me.’

Sungjin made a poker face as he continued to feel the exterior of the skull.

“... Mister Besgoro?”

‘Yes, that is my name. Although, I have peerage so call me ‘Sir’ instead of Mister.’

This was probably the passive skill ‘Chat(I)’. It appears that the only person who can hear the voices was Sungjin. Mahadas worriedly asked Sungjin

“Is the spirit still haunting you?”

‘Yes. My grudge cannot be washed clean with just my death. Curse you Dimitri...!’

“Count Dimitri is slain. I have severed his head.”

‘I know. You told me. You’ve done well, good job. He deserved to die!’

Sungjin recalled the Operator’s hint from earlier.

‘Betrayed and beheaded.’

‘Anyway! He accused me of plotting a rebellion! No such thought had occurred to me at all! In fact, I was planning on joining his family as a son-in-law!’

“Son in law?”

‘Yes by marrying the Count’s Daughter. She had fallen in love with me. So I asked for her hand in marriage. But once he heard that, he falsely accused me of treason and had me executed.’

“So that marriage... sounds like he was against it.”

‘I stood on the battlefield fighting for his honor and clan for 40 years!’

Sungjin couldn't help but feel that there was something strange about what had been said.

“Did you say 40 years?”

‘Yes. I have killed so many in the name of the Count. So many...!’

“How old were you when you asked for her hand in marriage?”

‘Hmm... I believe that I was 52 years old then.’

“And the Count's Daughter's age?”

‘20...’

Sungjin unhesitatingly commented

“That’s totally criminal!”

‘Why? If I dedicated 40 years of my life, letting me have his daughter is fine, right?’

“No, wrong. Totally not fine.”

Sungjin glanced at the others. The other four were staring at him.

‘What a shame...’

Their eyes seem to say. Sungjin slapped the skull on his head and said

“Ok, I got it. Count Dimitri is dead so let go of your grudge and pass on.”

‘But I want to roam the battlefields once more.’

“Then shut up”

‘Fine. Call me when you’re in battle.’

He finally stopped chatting.

‘But I’m never going to call you...’

Sungjin checked the other items while thinking so. The next item was a ring with a bright red ruby. Strangely, the color of the ring resembled blood.

Blood Sucker – Vampire’s Ring

Heroic Ring

Passive Skill

[Life Steal\(II\)](#) – Steal health for 2% of the damage dealt by physical attacks on hit.

Ring imbued with the power of Vampires.

Count Dimitri had the power of this ring injected directly into his blood by someone from ‘far away’.

The raw actually says “Drink blood”, but the effect is lifesteal (like league of legend with vamp scepter). So I went with Lifesteal. Vampirism was another interesting choice, but Sungjin isn’t turned into a vampire, so it didn’t seem right. And he doesn’t have to literally drink blood for passive to proc so “Drink blood” wasn’t a good translation either.

Simple and easy to understand item. It only had one skill, but the effects were unimaginably powerful. Especially since Sungjin’s offensive power was off the charts.

The last item was a small round coin. On it was minted an image of warhorses.

‘Looks just like [Mapae](#).’

The item called [Mapae](#) (Horse Requisition Tablet) was used by secret royal inspectors to requisition horses and soldiers from local stations, it gave them authority equal to highest rank in government with which they could dismiss anyone from office, including Governors (highest official rank) in the name of the king if they were found to be corrupt. It has the connotation of being

associated with justice and rightful authority.

Sungjin picked up the coin to inspect it.

Shadowrun – Ghost Stallion

Heroic Summon

Passive Skill

Spiritual Link (Shadowrun) – Summons Legendary Stallion who can run continuously without rest. 10 minute duration.

Besgoro's steed.

After the death of its master, the stallion continued to serve its master in death.

It was another summon. It would synergize well with the Title he had earned this round. Sungjin flipped the coin into the air. From midair

“Houhynhynm~”

With a loud noise, a ghost stallion appeared next to him. Of course, someone couldn't help but speak up.

‘Of all the many stallions I have ridden on in 40 years, he was the best! Ride him! You'll find no better mount!’

Sungjin climbed on top of the horse. Despite being a ghost, it made a great mount. Sungjin wanted to try running a lap around the castle like Besgoro had done. But, the Operator's announcement interrupted him.

[Returning to Black Market in 1 minute.]

‘I should try out the stallion next time.’

Sungjin climbed down from Shadowrun.

‘What? Why aren’t you galloping away on him?’

Besgoro asked. Sungjin replied

“There is only 1 minute left. I wanted to say goodbye to my teammates before we go.”

Sungjin first addressed Dominic.

“Stay well Dominic. I am glad we could save your life.”

“Thank you, Kei. If we meet again... I will definitely be of help.”

Next was Giovanni and Peng Long... but they were too busy haggling.

“3500”

“3000”

“3300... I won’t sell below this.”

“Let me buy it for 3000”

“No, I will not sell it for 3000. I’ll get a much better price at the Auction house.”

“We fought and worked together side by side through a raid. We’re comrades!”

“That’s why I discounted it to 3300!”

They were busy quarreling. Sungjin passed them and spoke to Mahadas. He had displayed impressive combat prowess as well as commendable attitude and mindset towards others.

Sungjin offered a handshake.

“It was good working with you, Venerable Mahadas.”

Mahadas returned the handshake and smiled.

“No, you were the benefactor, Kei. You’ve worked hard for our sake.”

“Then until next time we meet.”

Mahadas gathered his hands into a prayer.

“As our fate and Karma allows.”

[Returning to the Black market in 10 seconds. 10]

The operator’s countdown began. Peng Long and Dominic haggled up to the last few seconds fervently, and finally, they pressed their cubes against each others’.

Meanwhile, they both turned towards Kei to say their goodbyes.

“Thanks, Kei!”

“See you next time!”

Sungjin waved his hands towards the other Hunters.

[3, 2, 1, 0]

He was teleported away to the Black Market.

Chapter 054 – Black Market Sixth Shopping

The first thing Sungjin did once he arrived in the Black Market was to check how many coins he had in total.

“Operator, how many coins do I have?”

[10900]

“Hmm”

“We received new shipment! Please come and check them out!”

One of the vendors tried to grab his attention, but Sungjin paid no attention to him. The item he wanted to purchase at ‘Darker than Black’ would cost 10,000 Coins. He only had 900 coins in excess.

‘There’s nothing I can get with this.’

Sungjin thought of going to ‘Ninety Nine Nights’ straight away, but he got an idea.

‘Wandering Merchant’s Mystery Pouch.’

He didn’t have a chance to open it yet.

“Operator, can you retrieve the Mystery Pouch for me?”

The Operator handed Sungjin the item. Once it was in his hands, Sungjin thought about it for a moment.

‘Legendary... Crafting material eh?’

Currently, the Ancient Stories from the East ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’ was already complete. Once the Unique Legendary item is complete, receiving another material pertaining to it loses all meaning and becomes a redeemable coupon with the value of 500 coins to be exchanged for at the Black Market.

‘That’s if ‘Roulette’ lands on the Ancient Stories from the East volume parts...’

The losses of opportunity would be unthinkable. It wouldn’t be any better even if he got Ancient stories of the Middle East or West. From what he was told by the previous owner of ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’, [Declamation](#) worked independent of the item used, and could only be cast 1 time a day.

Incase it wasn’t clear, Declamation is a UNIQUE skill with global cooldown; You can only use declamation once a day, even if you had multiple books (or all of them). So having more books was literally useless.

In other words, even if he gathers and crafts another book, it would be useless. And although the ingredients for each book

would initially be worth 5000 Coins, if someone managed to gather and complete the book before he could sell it off, those pieces would drop in price to 500 coins each.

‘I hope I don’t get any book pieces...’

Until now the total number of Pouches he had seen being opened were three; two by himself, and by Serin Han. And of those, all three contained book parts.

If he was guaranteed to take a loss; it was better to go in with no expectations at all. Sungjin held the Pouch in silence for a while before he finally made up his mind.

‘I won’t open it. I’ll just put it out on the Auction floor.’

That was probably for the best. For those who already owned the books, the item held no real value anymore. But on the other hand, it could prove to be useful to other Hunters. Taking others into consideration, it was the right thing to do to make it available for other people.

Sungjin headed towards the ‘Three Achi Brother’s’ Auction house.

“Welcome, esteemed Hunter!”

Sungjin first asked them

“Did Manta get sold?”

The middle brother answered him back.

“No one placed a bid last night and so it was withdrawn.”

‘As I thought... Magic hasn’t really caught up yet with the general populace.’

“Should we cancel the auction?”

“No, no. Please continue to make it available on the floor.”

“Okay, understood.”

Sungjin then showed them the mystery pouch and said

“And please put this up for Auction.”

“How much would you like for us to sell this item for?”

Sungjin took a moment to consider.

‘If a book comes out, each one is worth 5000 Coins... if East

comes out, only 500...'

Anyone who understood the true value of the 'Mystery Pouch' would know that the pieces of 'Ancient Stories of the East' were already worthless.

'I should make it cheaper than 5000...But not too much lower than that.'

Sungjin replied

“Put the starting price at 3000, and buy out at 4000 please.”

This price seemed fair. It was an item with gambling element built in after all.

If they were to pay 4000 coins up front and then receive a favorable outcome, they would be satisfied with the purchase, and if they pay 3000 coins but are still disappointed, at least it wouldn't be too big of a loss.

Once he was done with his business, Sungjin left the Auction house and headed towards ‘Ninety Nine Nights’.

*

“Grrrrr~!”

When he arrived, Cain was baring his fangs and growling towards something. The place he was facing was the stables; Stables which now held his mount ‘Shadowrun’.

It was a stable that was always vacant, but thanks to ‘Spiritual Link’ the stable finally received an inhabitant. Sungjin reassured Cain as he gently tried to calm him down.

“Oh Cain, please don't do that.”

Cain stared at its master. Sungjin glanced at Shadowrun. There were food and water filled at the trough before it, but it didn't seem to have touched any of it. Sungjin extended his greeting towards the ghost stallion.

“I look forward to working with you too.”

Shadowrun replied in a low tone.

“Brrr.”

Responding to the horse, Cain resumed

“Grrrr~”

Cain was completely on guard against the horse. Even though they were both beasts, it didn't seem to like the fact that it was a ghost type. Sungjin returned his gaze to Cain and said.

“Ahh Cain, don't do that. You should make friends.”

Cain turned to look at him again. He didn't seem to want to do so. Sungjin couldn't help but say

“Oh well, let's go eat for now.”

“Woof.”

Cain obediently strolled into Ninety Nine Nights. Sungjin followed behind him and entered the Inn.

Sungjin was greeted by Dalupin and Genie Soldamyr who were waiting for him inside.

“Welcome back”

“Thank you, Dalupin.

“Good work today, Master.”

“[You did well today as well](#), Soldamyr”

Sungjin speaks to Soldamyr with respect, treating him like an elder, not like a master to servant. Sungjin does speak politely to most people, but Soldamyr is the only person who Sungjin shows deference to and speaks with much respect. Sungjin does speak with Mahadas respectfully, but he uses language how religious person would behave with a holy man, not as a youth to a respected elder.

Dalupin approached Sungjin and asked

“What would you like to eat for Dinner today?”

*

Sungjin was laying down. He had eaten Dried Shellfish, Sharkfin, Swallow Nest Soup, and other unspeakable Chinese course meal in bulk; he wasn't moving anytime soon.

‘I should go to bed early tonight if I want to wake up early tomorrow...’

Sungjin glanced outside. It was already dark out, long past sundown.

‘I wonder if someone bid on the Mystery Pouch...’

And exactly when he thought of that,

‘Knock Knock’

Dalupin knocked on the door. Sungjin opened the door for him as usual. And as always, Dalupin brought him a piece of paper and greeted him courteously.

“Are you getting a good rest?”

“Yes, thanks to you.”

Dalpuin handed over the paper and said

“Here is the information page for the next raid.”

Sungjin accepted the sheet and answered

“Ah, thank you.”

But Dalupin had another piece of paper.

“And this... this is a receipt from ‘Time is Money Plan’.”

Sungjin accepted the receipt.

Receipt – 3400 Black Coins

The item you placed on the auction, ‘Mystery Pouch’ has been sold.

3400 Black Coins was paid by ‘Head Hunter’.

Place the receipt into the cube to instantly redeem the amount.

Sungjin was surprised to see 'Head Hunter' as the purchaser since he already knew one such person.

"Thank you Dalupin. Oh yeah"

"Please tell me."

"Please wake me up at three thirty again."

"Understood. Please have a good rest."

Sungjin sent Dalupin away and read over it again.

'...did she buy this?'

It was likely that there were other 'Head Hunters' in the world, but buying Mystery Pouch so decisively, he was nearly certain it must have been her. But

'No, forget it... The chances we will meet again is less than 10%.'

Becoming attached to any random hunter could only bring more pain. He had experienced it time and time again. He gazed at the

receipt one last time before shoving it in the Cube.

[Received 3400 Black Coins.]

Sungjin walked out to the Balcony as he listened to the Operator's voice. In the distance, he could see the lights coming from the Black Market.

'I guess somewhere out there, another hunter is seeing this view...'

In another dimension, in another alternative 'Ninety Nine Nights', other Hunters lived and breathed. But the only time the hunters could interact with one another was during the Raids.

Even though he had Spiritual Links with his summons, he could never meet another Hunter in the Black market.

Hunters had to put their lives on the line to fight, but it was also a battle against loneliness. Sungjin let out a long sigh while staring off into the night.

"Sigh..."

It was then

[Attention Please.]

['Head Hunter' has succeeded in completing the Unique
Legendary item 'One Thousand and One Nights']

[All other copies will be destroyed, and the owners will be
refunded by 500 coins.]

Sungjin froze. One Thousand and One Nights; Arabian Nights. This was undoubtedly Ancient Stories of the Middle East. Sungjin couldn't help but recall the woman with long flowing hair. He thought to himself

'Serin... I guess our chances to meet again are higher than 10% after all.'

Sungjin turned away from the balcony. Behind him was a full moon.

*

Sungjin climbed down the stairs back to the main floor. Dalupin came to see him off. Soldamyr was inside his lamp. Once Sungjin was outside

“Woof”

Cain barked and ran after him.

“Cain don’t follow me. I’m going ‘there’ again.”

Cain didn’t listen and showed that he was going to come no matter what.

“Ok fine, I guess you can come until the entrance or something...”

“Puuuff”

Shadowrun watched him from the Stables. Because he was a ghost type, he apparently did not need sleep.

Sungjin put ‘Ninety Nine Nights behind him and headed towards the Black Market with Cain by his side. He headed towards Darker than Black. Once he reached the corner where Darker than Black was located, Cain stopped walking and sat down.

Sungjin wasn’t sure, but the man seemed to inspire fear in others. He took the shape of a man, but he was most definitely not a man.

“I’ll be back then.”

Sungjin said to Cain before entering the area. The stairway down was as dark as ever, but Sungjin was able to clearly see without trouble, thanks to Besgoro's Ghost Vision.

Sungjin unhesitatingly entered the darkness and entered the bar within. Inside, he saw the 'Hidden Merchant'.

"Second visit already. Welcome."

Sungjin approached him.

"I have come to buy the Item we discussed last time."

The Merchant took out a small marble from his coat.

"Here it is, the 'Trollseeker marble'. 10,000 Black Coins."

Sungjin didn't hesitate.

"Operator, Pay."

The Merchant handed over the 'Trollseeker Marble' to Sungjin and said

"As the name would suggest, it allows you to forcefully enter a raid where a Troll has appeared. In exchange, you need to recharge

its power. The recharge fee is a thousand coins each. Got it?”

Sungjin nodded. It was the same information he had heard last night.

“If you don’t have money you can’t use it. Just be aware.”

Sungjin replied looking straight into his eyes.

“That won’t be a problem. I am confident that I will be able to make more than a thousand coins each time I use it.”

The man grinned widely, revealing his white teeth.

“Is that so.”

Sungjin thought as he held the Marble.

‘Equip Adjudicator and hunt trolls in other Raids, and put the items I get, on the auction house... That should earn me minimum 1000 coins per jump.’

He would cut away ‘Trolls’ which obstructed the growth of other hunters as he empowered himself at the same time.

‘Except... keeping Adjudicator active...’

That was the only part that was bothering him; he would need to keep Adjudicator activated as long as he planned to go Troll Hunting. He could neither use Master Hunter nor Treasure Hunter titles. While he was thinking so, the Hidden Merchant spoke to him first.

“Why are you looking so troubled? Do you believe that you are restricted to a single title per round?”

It was as if he read Sungjin’s mind. When Sungjin turned his head towards the merchant, he continued, taking another item out of his coat; a Star shaped item with a whirlwind drawn in the middle.

“Star of the Nameless. It is an item that allows you to change your title at will.”

Sungjin’s eyes opened wide. The Merchant grinned again, revealing his white teeth as he laughed.

“Did I not tell you when you first came? If there is something you want, ask me.”

Sungjin couldn’t help but reach out to try and touch the item. The Merchant then muttered something, as if reciting verses from a holy book

“He who searches for answers finds questions, and he who searches for questions finds answers.”

Chapter 055 – Black Market Sixth Shopping

(2)

Sungjin touched the star’s whirlpool design. The Operator opened up the information screen.

Paranova – Star of the Nameless
Legendary Amulet
Active Rename(I) Change the Title. Cooldown 10 minutes
For some, Name is everything For some, Name is nothing

“How much is this?”

The man raised two fingers up.

“Twenty Thousand.”

Sungjin stared at the star for a moment. Even though the star was held in place, the whirl design seemed to spin on its own, as if

Sungjin was hypnotized.

‘20,000...’

Considering that Legendary items could be bought for just ten thousand, it was an item of immense value. Even Sungjin’s most expensive item, ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’, was worth 15,000 coins in component costs. But here was an item being sold for 20,000. The item effects were unbelievably useful.

‘Every 10 minutes I can change my title to use the full effects of each title... If I were to change my title according to situation...’

Sungjin kept the item in the back of his mind. Even if he were to receive a generous amount of raid rewards, it would still take two more chapters until he could gather enough coins to purchase this item. The man knew that as well.

“Well, you won’t be able to get it now but... Just know that this kind of thing exists.”

The man returned the star shaped item back into his suit. Sungjin stared at the man for a second. This man was on a completely different level compared to other vendors and merchants. Sungjin got an idea.

“Well then... Is there any way for me to be able to stay in contact with other hunters?”

The man fell silent for a moment to consider Sungjin's words. He then replied,

“Tell me more about what it is that you want to do.”

“For example... I met someone in a previous chapter, and I have become good friends with them. I would like to be able to meet them or at least be able to send and receive messages with them.”

“Hmm... That's difficult to accomplish. Especially in 'this world'... You probably know this already...”

The man turned to look at the Cube behind Sungjin as if to indicate the Operator.

“Communication between hunters is strictly forbidden unless you happen to meet each other during the raid...”

“So, is it impossible?”

The man raised his pointer finger and shook his head.

“No, there's no such thing as impossible. It's just... in order to overcome the structure of this world, you are in need of the 'Power of God'.

“Power of God?”

“Yes. The Power of God.”

Sungjin tilted his head at the words of the man. The merchant continued to explain.

“Well, Power of God isn’t anything as fancy as it sounds. The Power of God just refers to the holy ability to create something out of nothing. The Power of creation.”

He continued with his out of the world explanation. Then

“For example...”

He took out something from within his pocket.

“Something like this?”

It was a glass bottle. It was cut into a precise shape. There was some sort of fluid contained within.

“What is it?”

Sungjin asked. He answered

“Touch it. As you already know, touching is free in the Black Market.”

Sungjin placed his hand on the bottle.

Jasepit – Holy Water of Baptism
Mythological
Active Skill Baptism(I) Imbue the title of ‘The Chosen One’ to the target.
I am the grape tree. You are the branch.

‘Myth...?’

Even though Sungjin had been the longest surviving human in the previous raid, this was the first time he had come across a Mythological tier item. And the active skill was shocking to say the least.

‘Forcefully change the other person’s title to The Chosen One...’

The bizarre active skill was something Sungjin couldn’t even imagine to have existed. So he touched the Glass bottle again. It looked like an ordinary glass bottle, but it gave this strange sensation that his skin was sticking to it.

“How much is this?”

To his question, the merchant gave another question rather than an answer.

“How much do you think it is?”

When Sungjin couldn’t answer, he laughed and said

“Just one.”

*

“2000 to Strength, 2000 to Dex, 1000 Endurance, 500 to Magic Power and rest to Mind Power. Apply.”

[Applied.]

“And... equip title Adjudicator.”

[Equipped.]

Finally, Sungjin picked up the black spellbook in front of him.

Spellbook – Illusion

7th Class Black Magic

Create perfectly identical mimics.
The number of illusions is based on the magic power.

Soldamyr gave a tip from the side.

“It is a spell that is heavily influenced by Magic Power. Most mages would use this spell as a way to buy time to shout incantations. But you, who are proficient with the blade, should be able to utilize it offensively.”

Sungjin nodded.

“Memorize.”

The spellbook burned up in black flames. Next item to check after the spellbook was the ‘information sheet’.

“Information on Tahrathan Plateau”

Sungjin picked up the sheet and the toast sitting next to it and walked out of the Ninety Nine Nights. He sat on the rocking chair placed in front of the door and watched the sunrise.

He held the bread in his mouth, toasted with egg on top, for over a minute without moving. Finally, Soldamyr spoke up.

“Are you... uncomfortable? Master?”

“Ah? Mmm...”

Sungjin finally bit off the first piece before responding.

“No... I was just lost in thought.”

“Then I’ll be returning to the lamp. Please call for me if you need my assistance.”

Soldamyr returned to his lamp, and only Cain remained by his side. As if understanding what Sungjin was going through, Cain sat next to him motionlessly.

Sungjin petted his head as he continued to think.

‘Darker than Black... it was even crazier than I imagined...’

‘Definitely...’

Someone else's thought interrupted Sungjin inside his own head. It was Besgoro's voice. Sungjin asked him

“What? Did you see it too, grandpa?”

‘I am not your grandpa. I am a Knight. Call me Sir Besgoro.’

‘Geez, you're just a ghost, why are you so uptight?’

“Okay, Sir Besgoro. Were you able to watch the whole thing?”

‘Anything you can see, I can see. Anything you can hear, I can hear.’

It was an unwelcome revelation.

‘I should keep it off of me when I don't need it then.’

Sungjin thought to himself as he replied.

“What do you think it is? That place? That man?”

‘I'm not sure... even I, a ghost, finds him very peculiar. Actually, is he even a man? Is he even human? Or ghost? But not the same. He was closer to something like... closer to the Devil or God.’

The man was definitely a mystery, in many ways.

“Well, whether or not he is a Devil or God... he does seem to have the items I need.”

‘But why did you feel those items are necessary? I can see the argument for the star, but what about that Holy water? Where are you going to use that for?’

“... It’s for marking the people I need.”

‘People you need?’

“Yes. Strong, but also trustworthy.”

The ghost began to laugh at his words.

‘Heh ha ha ha ha ha~’

It was a ghastly laughter which echoed in Sungjin’s head. He decided to ask

“Why are you laughing?”

‘Such thing does not exist.’

Sungjin closed his mouth; he also knew what Besgoro was telling

him. After all, he had experienced it first hand. Besgoro continued to speak.

‘Well... Kind people, those who are eager to help others, that’s all good and all. But power does not gather around them. It is far more likely for them to have their power taken away. He who is strong has sapped much strength from those around him.

Sungjin paused and remembered for a moment.

‘Serin Han, Igor, Mahadas.’

And then he answered

“No. That is not always the case.”

‘Of course not. There are always exceptions. But the majority will be like that. Trust me. I have roamed the battlefields for 40 years. I have met countless allies, and watched most of them die.’

Sungjin silently listened. Besgoro’s 40 years of combat experience was something he could relate to.

‘But in the end, the ones who survive are those who are strong, who became strong by ruthlessly and mercilessly taking and stealing from everyone around them. Those who monopolize every resource they can take.’

Sungjin refuted him.

“You must believe so because you only lived on the battlefield your whole life. The place I’ve come from is a little different.”

To him, Besgoro gave a short reply.

‘It’s the same anywhere.’

And with that said, Besgoro finally went silent. Sungjin shook his head briefly, trying to shake loose the negativity the ghost had been trying fill his head with.

He had a flashback. To Serin Han, Igor, Mahadas, people he met in the previous life, the final ten members.

‘Araujo, Ryushin, Nada, Umkhuba, Ilich, Hildebrandt, Shunsuke, Mustafa, and... Edward.’

Each and every one of those members were incredibly powerful people. Master among masters. In luck and in skill. Rightfully described as ‘Those Chosen by the Gods’.

Sungjin was the best swordsman of them all, but in terms of his overall strength, it wasn’t very high compared to the other nine members. The only problem with the nine masters was the pride befitting of their enormous talent.

‘I will do the next one.’

‘No, it will be me’

‘If you’re fighting over contribution level, cut it out.’

‘Shut up. Do you have any idea what happened in the last raid when he tried to solo the boss?’

In the end, they were wiped out. Truth be told, the reason why the team got wiped out was not due to lack of status points or ability; each of the members overflowed with power.

The party was wiped out due to inability to cooperate. Sungjin lowered his gaze down to the ground. He could see his two swords, ‘Blood Vengeance’ and ‘Moon Specter’. He then had a thought

‘I am probably the strongest in this timeline. After all, I’ve done a 100% clear on every raid.’

Of the nine others who were in the final parties, he had some who he could get along with, and others he could not. And of the final few, there were those who ‘let their team get wiped out’.

Sungjin stood up.

‘Star of the nameless and Holy Water of Baptism; I’ll buy them both and create a brand new final ten members of my choosing.

And with these new teammates, I will see to the end of the ‘Final Raid’.

After he made up his mind, he took out something from within his jacket. It was a Ring. It was a simple ring, made of an ordinary metal.

Only, that it looked peculiar. It was made to look like two wires were twisted around as it created the bend. Sungjin lifted up the ring and inspected the status window.

Ring of Helrick – Ring of the Warlord
Heroic Ring
<div>Passive</div> <div>Reign(I)</div> <div>Receive 1 White Coin from those who, knowingly and of their own free will, kisses the ring.</div> <div>Those who kisses the ring receive a permanent 10% loss to all future Raid coin rewards.</div> <div>Can only be used 1 per person.</div>
<div>Between the two stairs, he lay and sang freely</div> <div>Holding the crown, the new King has returned.</div>

It was an item he paid 3000 Black Coins to purchase. Sungjin recalled the conversation from earlier.

‘Just... one?’

‘Yes, just one. But, it’s a different type of currency.’

He’s never heard of a white coin. At least, not from his memories of the previous life.

‘I don’t know what it does yet but...’

Sungjin made a fist and stood up.

‘I will obtain these things and rise as the new power and establish my rule over the Raids.’

Thinking of what he was going to do next, Sungjin returned to Ninety Nine Nights. The Sun gradually rose higher and higher into the morning sky behind him.

Chapter 056 – Tahrakhan Plateau (1)

The Sun shone brightly above in the spotless sky; not one puff of cloud obscured the view. But looking around, the cloud could be seen floating near the ground. The place Sungjin stood was a high elevation plateau.

[Welcome. This place is the Tahrakhan Plateau]

[The elevation is several thousand meters above sea level.]

[Please be warned, due to long term isolation, the life forms that inhabit this Plateau]

[Have evolved to survive in the harsh environment and have become particularly dangerous.]

Sungjin shivered involuntarily. He was wearing a warm shirt that Dalupin provided him with his clothes, but it still felt very cold. However, Sungjin kept a positive mindset.

‘It should warm up as I swing my sword around.’

[Synchronizing Hunters]

One by one the Hunters appeared after the Operator’s announcement. Sungjin watched them materialize without thinking much about it.

‘I don’t think there’ll be any surprises...’

But his prediction was off.

‘Inquisitor’, ‘Pirate’, ‘Pugilist’, ‘Treasure Hunter’

‘Treasure Hunter?’

Sungjin’s jaw dropped as he stared at the owner of the title. The man was an Arab holding daggers in each hand, sporting a long mustache. He was short and looked unremarkable, but his large eyes visibly sparkled.

‘Wow... The fact that he has Treasure Hunter title means... he managed to find a hidden element at some point in the past...’

It wasn’t too strange that he had received this title. It was already the 7th Raid. By now few of the others would have successfully found hidden elements along the way.

But what was surprising was that he had decided to set the title active.

First, he had to take 50% penalty on all other titles he didn’t pick. Second, even if he could find the boss, he still had to overcome the difficulty of defeating it.

Even Sungjin who had knowledge from the previous life waited six chapters until he felt safe enough to try switching Master Hunter to Treasure Hunter once.

There were two possibilities.

‘He’s either brave or stupid.’

Of course, he could be both as well. Sungjin suppressed his surprise and checked out the other teammates. The other three hunters looked fairly normal.

‘Inquisitor’ was a large built westerner. The ‘Pirate’ was a slightly tall Arabian and the ‘Pugilist’ was an Asian man. The Inquisitor took a look around and commented

“What a peculiar title we have this round.”

Sungjin agreed with him, thinking of the ‘Treasure Hunter’. But he then said

“Two in fact.”

Sungjin turned to face the Inquisitor. Their eyes met. He had been looking at Sungjin.

“Treasure Hunter and Adjudicator...”

The Pugilist said, cracking his neck by twisting it.

“Yeah, I’ve never heard of those titles before. Treasure Hunter... Do you get bonus rewards or something? And Adjudicator? What does that do?”

Sungjin stayed silent for a moment. Then the Pirate spoke up.

“One Westerner, two Middle Easterners, and two Asians? I hope to get along with the rest of you. Don’t go sticking a knife in people’s backs.”

Sungjin turned his gaze towards him.

‘Don’t go sticking a knife in people’s backs?’

The ones who say such things were most likely the very same ones who would do exactly what they promised not to do. Innocent people who don’t plan on doing such acts won’t even mention it, as it won’t even occur to them to think about it.

Sungjin had lived at the bottom of the society before the raids began, and he saw countless individuals do the same thing.

‘I will never scam you.’

He would likely aim to scam because scam is on his mind.

‘I won’t cheat on you.’

He is likely to cheat due to keeping himself aware of the possibility.

‘Don’t stab people in the back.’

He probably thought about it a lot, meaning he’s more likely to carry it out. And the fact that his title was ‘Pirate’ is suspicious. After all, Pirates are people who pillage from other people.

While Sungjin was thinking so, the Treasure Hunter finally opened his mouth.

“Listen carefully everyone. Let me tell you something amazing.”

Sungjin looked at him through the slit of his eyes.

‘No way...’

Unfortunately, he was right.

“There are hidden elements in this raid. Not one, but two.”

The other three hunters were immediately interested. Happy that the others showed such interest in his words, he smiled as he continued.

“One is a secret location on the map or an item. The other is a hidden boss.”

Once the basic information was said, the others showed even greater interest. Of course with the exception of Sungjin who already knew all of this. The ‘Inquisitor’ spoke first.

“Hidden Item? Hidden boss? That’s the first time I’ve heard of such things.”

The ‘Treasure Hunter’ looked smug as if he was revealing the secret of the universe.

“Yes. Each chapter has those things. And I know where to find them. Thanks to my title of ‘Treasure Hunter’.”

The ‘Pirate’ asked

“If it is hidden items, is it worth a lot?”

Treasure Hunter nodded. He wasn’t hiding anything. Once he began giving out free information, there was little reason to stop.

“Of course.”

Truth be told, just finding the place itself is a major advantage.

For example in the last raid, there wasn't much benefit to other hunters from the killing of Besgoro, but being able to meet 'Wandering Merchant Ruff Han' proved to be very fruitful to everyone else.

Pugilist asked

“So if we kill the hidden boss, we can get additional items or coins?”

Treasure Hunter responded hesitantly.

“Yeess... it should...”

From his behavior, Sungjin knew

‘So he probably wasn’t able to actually kill any hidden boss yet.’

Finding versus killing the hidden bosses were two very different things; there was nothing to be gained if you can’t defeat the hidden boss after all.

Even if all five hunters were to cooperate perfectly, facing against bosses on the level of Soldamyr and Besgoro (Although both have now become his familiars) were no easy feat.

They would have to prepare to lose one or two members on average.

So Sungjin had been hesitant to tell anyone about the existence of hidden bosses. In most cases, accidentally discovering the boss meant death.

The point Sungjin was curious about was at what chapter did he obtain the title. The Treasure Hunter was still busy answering questions.

“So when can we find those things?”

“Hahaha, let’s clear the raid first. We shouldn’t have death hanging over our heads as we go searching for the extras, right?”

He seemed to love answering questions and to be the center of attention. Sungjin waited for the right moment to ask his question.

“So at what chapter did you get the ‘Treasure Hunter’ title?”

“That’s...”

Although he was carelessly answering all the questions until now, he stopped at this point. Sungjin decided to manipulate him psychologically.

“I want to try and get that title too. You should let other people know how to get such an amazing title, don’t you think?”

At his words, the man began to grin sheepishly.

“Remember that desert?”

Hook Line and Sinker. He probably couldn't have imagined that the person asking 'how do I get the title' already has it. Sungjin nodded.

“Once we defeated the Raid boss Basilisk, we wandered around the desert and ran into a Sphinx. That Sphinx issued us a Riddle.

The other Hunters focused in on his story. And elated by the amount of attention he received, he told a detailed recount of the solving of the riddle and how he came to arrive at the hidden Oasis.

At the very end, he arrived at the point in the story where his team discovered the 'Lamp'. The Pugilist swallowed once before asking

“And?”

He urged for the Treasure Hunter to continue. But the story ended there.

“Ah well... that Lamp... it was made of gold so... I sold it at the Black Market.”

Unlike how excitedly he had told the story until that point, he was now stuttering. The Pirate decided to ask

“So? How much did you get?”

“Ah um... 2000?”

“2000?”

The Inquisitor's eyes grew wide, the Pirate licked his lips and the Pugilist commented

“Wow, that's amazing!”

Sungjin stared at him as he thought

‘Lies. 100% he rubbed it.’

Soldamyr's Lamp would have been discovered in a ‘Worn’ state. It was a normal tier item with only one ability ‘rub’.

Yes, it was made of gold, but with so much grime and wear, there was no way that lamp held value without cleaning. There is no way anyone decided to sell it without trying to rub it first.

Most likely story is that Soldamyr was summoned as a result, and he ran away while being attacked by a barrage of magic spells, losing few comrades in the process. Sungjin continued to stare at the Treasure Hunter as he thought

‘A liar, but not useless...’

Sungjin had to equip Adjudicator in order to test out ‘Trollseeker Marble’. If he could get the Treasure Hunter to use his skill to reveal both locations, it would help him greatly.

‘And of course, the reward is obviously mine.’

[Raid will begin in 3 minutes.]

At the Operator’s announcement, the Inquisitor snapped to attention.

“My, look where the time’s gone. Let’s put side story time for later and worry about our strategy for this round really quick.”

He wore a full plate mail and wielded a mace; a standard Tank.

The ‘Inquisitor’ title granted defense against magic attacks. The title itself could have been obtained after being hit by spells in Chapter 3 from the Lich, or Chapter 4 from “Cho’Roch’, or even Count Dimitri from the previous round.

Since it also gave a good boost to melee offensive power, it was a great choice for a tank who was confident in his defensive items.

“My name is Weiden Peller. As you can see, I am the tank.”

He must have been German. Blonde with green eyes and wide shoulders. Now that he thought of it, he even resembled ‘Hildebrandt’ from the final 10 members of his previous life. Although Hildebrandt was taller.

The Pirate spoke up.

“I am Jamar. I wield two scimitars.”

And just like he claimed, he wore two of them on his sides. Duel wielder. He didn’t reveal his nationality, but no one piped up. Next was the Asian Pugilist.

“I am Shigetoki. As you can see, I am a Karate practitioner.”

He was probably Japanese. And just as the name [Karate](#) would suggest, he carried almost no items at all despite reaching chapter 7. Of course, in place of items, he had massive amounts of muscles.

(Karate 空手: Empty Fisted)

Next was the ‘Treasure Hunter’.

“I am Mustafa, I use daggers.”

He shared the same name as the previous final 10 member, ‘Mustafa’. But his appearance and personality were completely

different. In the previous life, Mustafa was a quiet and earnest man. Sungjin also gave his prepared response.

“Kei. As you can see, a Swordsman.”

No one was particularly interested in him. Even the Inquisitor who had asked him about the Adjudicator earlier was distracted by the ‘Treasure Hunter’ and gave no attention to him.

“Is anyone able to use magic here?”

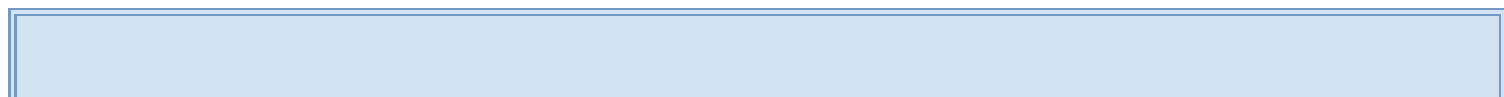
While the four others gathered to try and discuss a strategy, Sungjin let out a long yawn and stretched.

“Haaa~”

In order to go to ‘Darker than Black’ at 4:30 every night, he had to get in the habit of going to bed earlier. Sungjin wiped away his tears as he thought

‘I can’t wait to quickly end the chapter and try out the Trollseeker Marble.’

He didn’t know which unlucky troll he would be summoned onto, but there was no way to escape him. He would be forced to give up two items and die. The Operator gave an announcement.



[The raid will begin in 1 minute.]

Chapter 057 – Tahrakhan Plateau (2)

Tahrakhan Plateau Raid

Objective – Hunt the Harpy Queen ‘Laliha’

Time limit – 1 hour

The Operator’s information page opened up, and the hunters gathered around to discuss.

“I guess there’s no ranged attacker this round.”

“I guess so.”

“Don’t we need some magic power?”

“I can use a few.”

“I tried to learn some myself... but the magic power was too low to be useful. It wasn’t worth it.”

“I know. I tried to learn one or two, but sold the rest after I tried them out.”

While the hunters were chatting away, Sungjin was considering how he could coexist with the ‘Treasure Hunter’ in the party.

‘I don’t like the idea that he might be able to find the hidden

element before I do and take away the reward...’

Sungjin tried to come up with ideas in his head about how to deal with him.

‘I’ll just use my Treasure Hunter active from the start. And once I complete the hidden piece, I will stick around that guy until he uses the hint, and then just end the Raid and collect the last hidden element.’

Once he was done planning his next move, Sungjin restlessly waited for the Raid to begin.

[5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0]

The moment the Raid began he turned to the others and announced

“I have business to take care of so I’ll be right back, friends. Go around hunting Harpies or something.”

Everyone turned to stare at Sungjin in shock. The ‘Inquisitor’ was first to reply

“What the... “

But Sungjin didn't have time to explain. There was always fundamental differences in priorities between game show participants and the man who aimed to become the director of the show.

“Try to hunt as many harpies as you can before I come back. That'll be the only way you will be able to get yourselves some contribution points.”

Once Sungjin was done speaking, he flicked a coin into the air. Momentarily

“Hiiiihihihi~”

A horse appeared out of thin air and whined; ‘Shadowrun’ had arrived. Sungjin climbed on top of the horse and grasped the reins before galloping off into the distance. For a brief moment, he thought of the hunters he was leaving behind but

‘If they aren't able to kill even normal mobs with four people... they're all going to die sooner or later anyway.’

Sungjin ended his worry. The weak dies. That was the nature of this game.

In the first time around, Sungjin did not consider this and tried to keep everyone alive to the best of his ability, but after having to restart, he had become coldly calculative.

‘Those with poor ability or nature will not be allowed to continue.’

It was true that the more ‘people left to participate in raids’ the better, but in the end, only the best would be able to remain anyway.

If any one of the four hunters in this round had the talent to reach the end game, it would become self-evident by the time he came back.

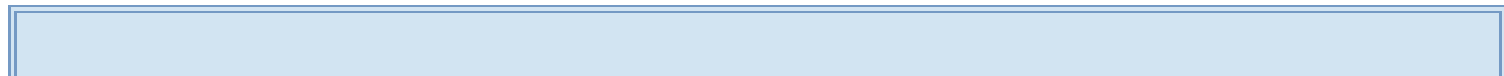
‘To be honest, none of them looked good enough to be ‘chosen’...’

Even if it weren’t from this particular raid, Sungjin would intervene in various raid teams to ‘select’ his final members. And with the ‘Chosen Ones’ he would beat the final Raid together.

Becoming ‘The one who overcame the boundary of the game’s rule’ could never be done if he simply acted and participated normally like all the others.

Sungjin became more and more aware that he has become more than just another participant. Galloping away on Shadowrun, he called for the Operator.

“Operator, use the Treasure Hunter active. Please tell me where I can find hidden treasure or boss.



[This is the hint about the hidden Treasure.]

Sungjin concentrated on the content of the hint.

[At the edge of Cliffs]

[Abandoned by Parents and left alone]

[The precious one survived and grew]

[This is the way of the True Nobles]

[Only those who break out of their shell and return alive]

[May then lay claim to the throne]

He heard it once, but he didn't quite get it.

“Operator, Tell me again.”

The Cube repeated itself. Sungjin stopped the horse while listening to the hint.

“Whoa whoa~”

He stopped Shadowrun and checked his surroundings. It was difficult to see due to the thick layer of clouds drifting by. Even if he had ‘Ghostvision’, he could not see through objects.

Luckily the clouds were constantly moving. Watching for moments when they thinned out, Sungjin was able to get a glimpse of the ground. It was possible to see very far on the Plateau.

While looking around alone, Sungjin recalled

‘What you can see I can see.’

He remembered about Besgoro and called upon him.

“Mister Besgoro~”

He heard an annoyed voice respond.

‘I told you to call me Sir!’

“I don’t feel like it. You should be thankful that I’m even talking to a 52 year old man.”

‘Hmph!’

“Ah that’s right, you’re not even a Mister. Just an old [Bachelor](#).”

In Korea old bachelor is considered extremely bad; a major insult.

Besgoro snapped

‘Bachelor! My god, the only reason why I didn’t marry until this age was because I was too busy fighting on the battlefield!’

“Ok fine... Anyway, Mister Besgoro, I mean Sir, do you see the edge of the Plateau?”

‘No, I can’t see it.’

“Right? I’ll ride on with Shadowrun so please let me know if you see the edge of the cliff appear.”

‘Alright.’

“Yaa~”

Sungjin urged Shadowrun forward. Although oxygen was thin this high up, it didn’t matter to a ghost stallion.

He galloped away without tiring out and ran across the Plateau.

*

Once ‘Kei’ suddenly left, the other four hunters quickly went to work on hunting Harpies like ‘Kei’ had suggested.

They didn't like the fact that Kei decided to act alone and took off, but they didn't have any other choice.

“Baahh~”

In the distance, a large male Goat was spotted. But its appearance was anything but ordinary. To begin with, the Horns were gigantic.

The horns curled around into a spiral until it came to a point facing forward. But this point was as long and sharp as a spear point.

It glared at the hunters quite unlike a herbivore would; it was intimidating. The Inquisitor held up his spear and muttered to himself.

“It looks like it would munch on skin instead of grass.”

As soon as he said something the Goat charged.

“Baaa~”

The mountain goat charged at an alarming speed. The Inquisitor who took its momentum head on was flung away by the impact, but he still shouted

“Attack!”

After the momentum was killed, the Goat was defenseless against the ‘Pugilist’, ‘Pirate’ and the ‘Treasure Hunter’.

The Mountain Goat tried to fight back swinging its massive horns around to threaten the Hunters, but it was quickly killed by the focused attack of the three hunters, and the Inquisitor who quickly came back to join in.

Once the first enemy was slain, the Inquisitor let out a sigh.

“Whew... what kind of goat... is stronger than a bear...”

“Well, the appearance don’t matter, right? I thought the enemies steadily rise in difficulty as we progress through the Chapters.”

Everyone nodded to the Treasure Hunter’s words.

The average stats of the survivors had to continuously rise faster and faster. Taking this into consideration, the Goat they were facing now was incomparably stronger than the Bear that appeared in Chapter 2.

This world was indifferent to the common sense of Earth. The ‘Pugilist’ seemed to be enjoying the situation, however.

“It’s no fun if there’s no challenge!”

It was at that moment

“Oof!”

The Inquisitor was raised into the air. The others looked up to see; He was caught by a Harpy and were being carried off somewhere as he struggled

The Treasure Hunter quickly recited an incantation.

“Incinerate everything in your path!”

But the Fireball which left his hands missed the Harpy. What saved the Inquisitor was the Pirate’s spell.

“Steel-cutting Blades of Wind! Wind Cutter!”

One of the formless blades that left his hands landed on the wing.

“Kyaa~!”

The Harpy cried out in pain as she fell out of the air, along with the Inquisitor. It was a chance. All of the hunters rushed to the Harpy to kill it before it could escape.

The Harpy tried to put up a fight with its sharp-clawed feet, but it was soon killed off by the hunters. The ‘Treasure Hunter’ checked

the Inquisitor.

“Hey, are you alright?”

“Ugh...”

His leg was bent the wrong way. He must have injured himself when he landed. Despite the pain, he managed to shout out in anger.

“I was stuck in the air! Why did you attack so recklessly?”

The Pirate was at a loss for words.

“Wow, even though I just saved you...”

Arguments between teammates were bad news. The raids were difficult enough as it is even with full cooperation between all the members. If a fight were to break out between team members, it could only lead to annihilation. The hunters knew this through experience by now and acted quickly to resolve the tension before it could escalate.

“Don’t be like that...”

But the Pugilist added

“Why are you whining because of a small injury? You can just drink one potion and it goes away, right?”

But his words only fanned the flames.

“What?! You think potions solve everything? How about you stand in the front next time, let’s see how well you do?!”

“What are you talking about? You’re a tank, act like one. I’ll do my job safely from the back. It’s fair, right?”

In the open space of the Plateau, the rising volume of the hunters’ argument echoed far and wide.

*

Sungjin continued to push his horse forward. He could see monstrous goats in the distance, but they didn’t chase after him while he rode the ghost Stallion.

Sungjin recalled his old memories.

‘Those guys were really tough back then...’

In the past, the tank had been gravely injured when he was

caught off guard and impaled by the horn of a goat.

‘...That hurts even now.’

Sungjin looked left and right to search for a cliff wall. But he couldn't see the edge anywhere. Sungjin called upon Besgoro.

“Sir Besgoro...”

‘Not yet.’

He was acting quite unlike himself and responding with short replies. He must be angry at being called ‘Old Bachelor’ earlier.

‘This 52 year old grandpa sure acts immature... Well, I guess I already knew this side of him when he said that he proposed to a 20 year old lady...’

Sungjin doubted that Besgoro had a healthy, mature mentality. And due to existing for a long time as a ghost, he seemed a bit off as well.

‘I'll just ignore this crazy old man and... hmm, let's see...’

Sungjin turned the horse towards a hill overlooking the area. However, even from this vantage point, he could not see the edge of the Plateau through the clouds below.

Sungjin tried to go over the hint again.

‘At the edge of Cliffs’

‘Maybe it’s an allusion?’

If that were the case, it would be a headache to try and solve it.

‘What if it isn’t literally the cliff wall? What could it be...?’

While he was thinking that, Shadowrun stopped in his tracks.

“What’s wrong Shadowrun?”

While Sungjin was verbalizing his question, he noticed why. Before him was a sheer cliff face.

‘So it wasn’t an allusion.’

Sungjin dismounted from Shadowrun. Next, he carefully approached the wall and looked over the edge. He could not see the bottom.

Sungjin looked around. The cliff continued endlessly.

“Wait... is this...”

Besgoro verbalized Sungjin's thoughts.

'The entire Plateau must be surrounded by sheer cliff.'

In that case, it was time to change mounts. Sungjin addressed Shadowrun.

"Thank you for your hard work Shadowrun. Go rest in the stable... Unsummon."

Once Shadowrun vanished, Sungjin took out the Magic Carpet from the Cube.

"Flight."

Sungjin rode the carpet and flew alongside the cliff face. As he checked the walls, he thought to himself,

'Claim the throne... claim the...'

Chapter 058 – Tahrakhan Plateau (3)

“Die! Please!”

Inquisitor swung his mace desperately.

“Baaa~”

The Mountain Goat let out a bleating cry as it fell dead. He quickly took a recovery potion out of his belt and drank it down. The wound on his side quickly closed itself.

The effects of ‘Recovery Potion’ were quite good, but it didn’t numb the pain at all. The Inquisitor pressed down on his injury as he took a look around. They had killed 3 Goats and 2 Harpies at once this time. According to the Information sheet, killing 20 mobs would automatically summon the Harpy Queen.

‘It’s so hard to kill each individual mob... at this rate, we might have difficulty summoning the boss in time...’

As he thought about the party’s progress through the raids, he checked the state of the other three hunters. All three of them bore small and medium wounds.

This was an unavoidable situation for the lot of them. Because the Goats and Harpies suddenly attacked them en masse, he had been unable to cover for all of them. It was a stroke of good luck that they had no fatalities yet.

‘Are you guys all alright?’

It was a phrase that anyone would have uttered by now, but the men were in silence. Each was too busy taking potions out of the cubes and drinking them.

After they fought the first Harpy, they had created irreconcilable differences between each other and were too busy being overly mindful of each other’s actions. The burst of anger earlier had ruined their chances of proper teamwork.

‘I don’t know when they might turn against me’

Because of their uncertainty, they couldn’t work together nor relax around each other. ‘Inquisitor’ Weiden Peller looked over to the Japanese man he had nearly started a brawl earlier.

He was skilled. Amazingly, his fists were more powerful than hunters wielding weapons.

‘But... I can no longer trust him.’

He was strong, but that became a cause for anxiety, as he didn’t know how to deal with him later if the Pugilist were to suddenly betray him.

‘For now, we’ll have to work together until we reach the boss...

but...'

As he thought so, he looked over to the Treasure Hunter. He was talkative, but his actual skill was subpar.

He had a fancy looking daggers, but all he ever did was kill steal enemies at the very last second when there was no risk to himself. During fights, he was too busy running away from danger.

'Hidden Pieces... what a joke. How can we go searching for treasure if we can't even complete the objective?'

He then turned his attention to the Pirate last. He had somewhat good skills, but nothing about him was particularly trustworthy. Appearance wise, he would have fit right in in any one of the conflict zones in the Middle East.

'The title could always be referring to his previous job as a Somali Pirate...'

This chapter had nothing but people he didn't like. He picked up his shield and Mace and turned his head. Now that he thought of it, there was another person that pissed him off.

'Go hunt harpy or something.'

He suddenly took off without warning, that Kei man.

In some ways, he was the worst of all. The Raids were difficult enough as it is with all five hunters cooperating. But he had snuck out from the very start. The team power started at 4/5th of normal levels.

‘Damn it, did he get himself killed alone or something?’

As he insulted others in his mind, he returned his gaze forward. He could sense that the others were following him. No one wanted to speak, but they still cooperated with each other on an instinctive level.

Despite their hostility and distrust against one another, their teamwork was driven by survival instinct and necessity, despite their uneasy silence.

‘What a fucking retarded chapter.’

*

At the same time, Sungjin was riding the Magic Carpet along the outer edge of the Plateau. He was trying to see if he could spot any nest built into the sheer cliff wall.

According to the hint he obtained, the hidden element should be some form of an egg. The Operator said

‘Only those who break out of their shell and return alive’

She had said.

While he was flying along the cliff face,

‘Kei’

Besgoro called for him. He stopped the flight and replied.

“What is it? Did you find a nest with an egg in it?”

Besgoro was carefully watching the surroundings watching out for the egg. However, the words that came out of his mouth was different from what Kei had been expecting.

‘You’ve got guests.’

Sungjin raised his gaze up into the sky above. Harpies were flying towards him.

‘One, two, three... five in total.’

Once he was done counting his foes, he quickly gazed down below the Magic Carpet. The endless cliff wall continued on seemingly forever.

Trying to fight winged opponents while standing on the magic

carpet with his sword did not seem like a wise decision.

‘It’s time for magic.’

Once he made up his mind, Sungjin began to try and cast the spell.

‘Murderous...’

But he was interrupted.

“Murderous thunder, Jump from foe to foe!”

Besgoro’s skull shouted out on its own.

“Chain lightning!”

Lightning gathered on the tip of Moon Specter, and Sungjin immediately pointed it towards the flying monsters.

‘Bzzzt!’

The lightning hit home with the closest Harpy and jumped to all the other harpies. The first two dropped like stones out of the air, and the other three harpies were stunned for a moment.

“Whoa”

Sungjin exclaimed.

‘This is Substitute Chanting. I’ll do the incarnation for any spell you are thinking of using.’

It didn’t seem like he could control the timing for spell activation, but that wasn’t a problem. If he timed it right, he could probably cast two spells simultaneously. Besgoro added

‘Just be aware it cost double the normal amount of mana.’

“Got it, thanks Besgoro.”

Being able to use two spells simultaneously would give Sungjin all sorts of combat advantages. While thinking of the possibilities,

“Kyah!”

One of the surviving Harpies came flying at Sungjin brandishing its sharp-taloned feet. Sungjin moved the Magic Carpet dexterously avoiding the Talons.

At first, just one Harpy engaged in combat against him. But due to inexperience with flying, a sharp talon grazed the top of Sungjin’s head. It didn’t hurt, but it made the hair on the back of his neck stand.

“Keeeyah!”

The second Harpy joined the fray. While dodging their attacks, Sungjin suddenly dropped his altitude rapidly, avoiding an attack in the last minute. This time, he dodged the talons by a large margin. Now that he was getting used to the enemies and flying, he figured out how to fight them.

Once he felt confident, he waited until the third one arrived to tilt the Magic Carpet and swing his sharp blades.

The swords sliced through one of the harpy’s right leg, and the other severed another harpy’s left wing.

“Keey...Ahhh!”

The harpy’s signature battle cry turned into a scream of terror as it fell out of the sky. Sungjin watched it fall and grinned.

‘Mid-air Combat isn’t so bad...’

But suddenly the Operator gave a warning.

[Please return to the hunting grounds. This area is off limits to hunters.]

[If you remain in the restricted area after 10 seconds,]

Sungjin scanned his surroundings. He had dropped his altitude too far while trying to dodge the Harpy's attacks.

[You will die. 10...]

He could take dozens of attacks by the harpies and remain alive, but if that countdown finished, he was done for.

‘Hey, Kei.’

Besgoro must have felt threatened by the warning message.

“I know.”

Sungjin immediately raised his altitude with the Magic Carpet, sticking close to the cliff wall. The two harpies continued their pursuit.

‘So annoying...’

Sungjin raised his swords. It was difficult to exhibit 100% of his potential while riding the carpet, but as long as he grazed them, it should cause instant death.

Sungjin easily cut down one of the harpies.

‘One down.’

And then he prepared for the next one. But the last one

“Kaa!~”

Let out a long cry and turned to flee. Sungjin was about to give chase when he decided against it. The flight speed of Magic Carpet and Harpies were roughly the same.

He would be wasting precious time trying to chase the Harpy. Also

‘Harpies tend to flee when all their allies have been slain. If they manage to get away, they will return with a large number of reinforcements.’

The ‘Information sheet’ said as much. The harpy would show itself again, and with many comrades in tow.

‘Since I have to kill them anyway, it’s pretty convenient they will go gather all of them up on my behalf.’

Sungjin thought as he returned to inspecting the cliff walls. In truth, there was a time limit to the aerial inspection. The Magic Carpet could only fly for a total of 20 minutes.

Once this happens, he would have to search for the egg on foot, hanging onto the cliff wall. When he thought of it, Sungjin began to grow nervous.

‘How much time do I have left?’

But it was at this moment that he noticed something. Between the outcropping of minerals, he noticed something sparkling. Besgoro spoke up.

‘Kei’

“I saw as well.”

Sungjin moved closer to the shiny object. On it was a large nest. It was several times larger than a typical bird nest.

And within, there was an egg roughly three times the size of normal chicken eggs.

Slowing down the Magic Carpet, he carefully approached the nest. He felt a strange sense of dignity contained within the egg.

The Egg was slightly golden in color. It looked like the egg could almost double as precious gem.

‘Precious one survived and grew...’

Sungjin recalled the hint from earlier. He put away his swords and gently lifted up the egg with both his hands. The Operator gave an announcement.

[Congratulations! You have obtained the Hidden Piece]
[‘Ra – Egg of Gold’]

“He, La la~”

Singing in happiness, Sungjin checked the status window on the egg.

Ra – Egg of Gold

Rare Egg

Passive Skill

Tremor of Beginning(I) – Will Tremble once a day

Nobility is not determined by birth but by everyday conduct in life.

“Hmm?”

Sungjin tilted his head in confusion. It was a mysterious skill. In fact, it was strange to even call it a skill, or a passive.

Most of all, it would tremble once a day of its choosing. It had no utility or function for now. Sungjin decided to ask Besgoro

“Excuse me, Besgoro, do you know anything about this egg?”

‘No, it’s the first time I’ve seen one.’

Besgoro was useless just when he needed him. When Sungjin was about to reread the Status page

‘Kyah~!’

He could hear unwelcome cries in the distance. When he turned his head to check, he saw a flock of Harpies flying his way.

‘Oh my...’

Sungjin quickly stuffed the egg into the cube and counted his foes.

‘One, two, three...’

There was too many this time for an accurate count. About a dozen or more. Sungjin looked up; he followed the cliff wall up to the Plateau. Now that he found the egg, he had no more business on the edge.

No matter how strong he was, challenging dozens of winged monsters mid air with a temporary flight item would be a dumb move. Especially so close to the boundary he is not allowed to cross.

The fastest of the Harpies was almost upon him, but Sungjin ignored them and continued to climb.

And once he finally reached the ‘Tahrakhan Plateau’s’ flat land, he jumped off the Magic Carpet and spun twice in the air before landing on the Plateau ground. Behind him, countless Harpies threw themselves upon him.

Sungjin unsheathed his sword and muttered

“Come then, dumb fruit flies; come fly into the raging inferno with your own wings.”

Chapter 059 – Tahrakhan Plateau (4)

“Chain Lightning!”

Lightning gathered at the tip of Sungjin’s sword and blasted its way towards his enemies. Several harpies were fried, falling out of the air after a seizure. Sungjin tried to count them again.

‘One two three four’

He had killed so many, but there were still four remaining. There were more than 10 to start with. The warning about reinforcement was no joke. Sungjin began reciting the incantation. Suddenly

“Murderous...”

Besgoro began to shout out the spell before he could. ‘Substitute chanting’ must have come off of cooldown. Sungjin timed himself and also chanted the incantation alongside Besgoro.

“Thunder, Jump from foe to foe! Chain Lightning!”

“Murderous thunder, Jump from foe to foe! Chain Lightning!”

Two spells went off simultaneously, and the chain lightning burst forth from both hands.

The first shot landed on a group of harpies and hit multiple

targets, but his second shot fired from the left hand hit a loner without any splash damage.

“Hmm...”

Sungjin checked his left hand. The feeling was very similar to dual wielding with swords; it required quick and complex calculations.

“He” was really good at chain casting one spell after another... I should try to test how spells synergize when cast together when I have time in the ‘Ninety Nine Nights’.

As he made plans for the night, he returned the swords to the scabbards. Before him lay dozens of sizzling corpses of Harpies. Sungjin checked the cube.

No message about the ‘Harpy Queen’ was announced.

‘I guess it wasn’t enough...’

In some ways, this was better. Based on what happened with ‘Oryx’ or ‘Basilisk’, Sungjin guessed that ‘Summoned’ boss mobs will most likely appear where the most hunters are gathered. It was a guess made with a very small data set.

Sungjin thought about the other four hunters.

‘I wonder how they are doing... they probably hate my guts by now...’

It would be strange if they didn't. They were forced to try and do the raid while being a man short; despite having the opportunity to earn more contribution points without him present (although in actuality they will not), they would be having far more difficulties without the fifth member being there.

But Sungjin couldn't help it. Besides, if they weren't skilled or powerful enough to be able to kill the boss as a group of four, they weren't good enough to go very far anyway. If they were weak enough to be killed here, they would die without question sometime in the near future.

It was ruthless, but in order to survive the very late game, there was no choice other than to prove their own worth through power.

Once Kutan Desert Raid finished, the Operator had congratulated the 600,000 hunters for reaching 'top 0.01% rank', but the real deal begins with the final 6000 hunters, the 'top 0.0001% ranks'.

Of course, once the raid had progressed to that point, Sungjin would already have begun a fight against enemies of a fundamentally different level. While he was lost in thought

“Hmm?”

He saw one harpy flying away in the distance. He must have just

barely survived due to the skill hitting too many targets before reaching him.

‘Should I let him bring more reinforcements?’

Sungjin considered his options, but he quickly made up his mind. If he killed too many harpies here, he would accidentally unleash the Queen on the unsuspecting hunters.

Sungjin watched the Harpy fly for a moment before reciting an incantation.

“Discard your fangs and become a tame sheep! Polymorph!”

The Harpy who just flew past the edge of the Plateau suddenly turned into a sheep. The enemy, who suddenly lost his wings

“Baaa~”

Disappeared over the edge of the cliff.

[Low Mana]

The Operator finally warned Sungjin of his mana level. Sungjin pointed towards the mountain of Harpy corpses and said

“Lich’s beckon”

The Lich’s finger uncurled itself and beckoned for souls to come. Sungjin felt himself refill with mana. After watching the process for a moment, Sungjin turned to look around.

He felt that it was almost time for ‘Harpy Queen’ to show itself around the other Hunters. Sungjin said

“Swift Paw”

Wolf’s claws emerged from his boots, and he sprinted towards the direction he came from.

‘I need to start intervene in other Raids... I’ll leave as many trash mobs undisturbed as possible so that the other hunters can have a chance to scrape together some contribution points.

In the situation where there were limited amount of contribution points to go around, this was the most he could do for them.

*

“Moouo~”

The buffalo let out a deafening sound as it fell over on its side. It was a buffalo in appearance only; it was a monster as large as an elephant. The Hunters just barely fought off the enemy and gasped

for air.

“Ha... Haa...”

Everyone was out of breath; Killing just one of this monster took them more than 5 minutes.

“Ugh...”

Some of them were groaning in pain due to injury sustained by spear-like tusks. Once the fight to the death was over, the hunters took a moment to look at each other.

Each and every battle was close, and the hunters were just barely overcoming their enemies. Instinctively, they came to an understanding

‘We cannot kill the queen by ourselves.’

The four hunters wordlessly drank potions. No one spoke, no one moved. They couldn’t hunt anymore. If they accidentally went over the threshold and summoned the queen, they were almost guaranteed to be annihilated.

Even if they were able to just barely defeat the queen, it was obvious it would be at the sacrifice of at least half of the members. They had watched several teammates die over the course of 6 Raids.

Thinking that it was going to happen to them in the near future, terror gripped their hearts. While the four men stood in mutual silence, it was the weakest 'Treasure Hunter' who first broke the silence.

"I can't see us beating the boss with just the four of us...What should we do?"

It was a problem they had no control over. The Pirate replied

"Beating the boss? Yeah, it's going to be hard. Because of you."

He mercilessly blamed the Treasure Hunter. He must have piled up frustration and complaints until now.

"What?!"

Whether it was intended or not, the Treasure Hunter held up his dagger threateningly. The Inquisitor intervened and broke up the fight.

"Stop. Even if you two fight, our situation won't get any better."

The Pugilist, who was the main instigator of the previous infighting, said

"What about... looking for that Adjudicator? I don't know where

he's gone but..."

The Treasure Hunter agreed with him.

"I think that would work. Having all five present would help immensely, wouldn't it?"

The Pirate was more pessimistic.

"The monsters are incredibly difficult to kill with the cooperation of us four. How could he have survived alone until now? He must have become Harpy food by now. That idiot... must have been driven insane by fear..."

It was at this timing

“Yo friends, what are you guys up to?”

The ‘Adjudicator’ Kei suddenly appeared out of nowhere and stood in the center of the hunters. Not a single scratch or smudge dirtied him anywhere. He was neither ‘Harpy food’ nor ‘driven insane by fear’ as the Pirate had suggested.

Kei turned around to look at the buffalo corpse and commented

“Looks like you guys were doing well.”

At the same time, the Cube suddenly gave out a warning.

[Warning! Boss Monster]

[Harpy Queen Laliha has appeared!]

At her words, the hunters including Kei stared at the cube.

“Hmm?”

The hunters frowned, finding the situation unfair.

“We didn’t hunt enough harpies though!”

Kei replied to them

“Ah... There was that one Harpy that was chasing me earlier... That must have been the trigger.”

“Ahoo~”

A strange song could be heard in the distance as a flock of harpies flew towards the Hunters. With just a glance, the hunters could tell that there were at least a dozen in the flock. The four hunters fell deep into despair.

They had been just barely overcoming one or two enemies at a time, but now they had to fight at least a dozen simultaneously. Only Kei remained calm. He looked around to the others and advised

“Stand apart. Harpy Queen uses a sound-based attack which causes disorientation. Being hit as a group is dangerous.”

Harpies were fast gaining on them. Kei quickly said

“The one hit by confusion attack should crouch and stay still while the others protect him. And then try to slap the disoriented person awake. That’s all.”

The hunters stood some distance apart for now. Even if he didn’t tell them this, it was part of the information written in the

‘Information Sheet’. But then Kei added

“Ah, just so you know, don’t hit me while I’m sleeping. I have someone else to wake me up.”

He fumbled around in his pocket while speaking and threw something in the air. A Wolf appeared out of nowhere.

“Grrr”

It was an intimidating wolf. Kei whispered something in his ears. Then glancing over the flock he muttered

“...If I wanted to do it solo...”

He took out a lamp from his coat and rubbed it. A blue genie appeared from the lamp.

“How may I serve you, master?”

Everyone stared at it in shock. Especially ‘Treasure Hunter’ who leapt back.

It was the same blue genie that killed his teammates back in Kutan Desert.

The only reason why he survived the encounter with the Genie

was that he stood at the very back when the Genie fired a spell at the team.

He had turned into a sheep and had left the Oasis with everything he had. It was only two chapters ago when he barely escaped with his life. To others, he had boasted

‘Sold it for 2000 gold’

But in reality, he was inches from death. So when he jumped back in fear, the ‘Adjudicator’ Kei turned around to look at him and grinned; as if he already knew everything from the beginning.

“Ahoo~”

The Harpies’ song became louder and louder. At the center flew a particularly colorful Harpy.

It was not much bigger than other harpies, but anyone could tell she was the “Harpy Queen”. Kei bent over and whispered

“Cain, fight far away from me, and come bite my foot if I fall asleep.”

“Woof!”

“Bite within reason...”

“Woof woof”

He turned to look at the Genie.

“Soldamyr, stay close to that Treasure Hunter and protect him. Don’t worry about me.”

“Understood.”

“Also, if Cain and I both fall asleep, wake us up with magic. If possible, with weak power...” The Genie bowed as he answered

“Understood. I will obey.”

Afterwards, he took his spot behind the “Treasure Hunter”.

“E...eeek!”

The Treasure Hunter couldn’t help but cry out in fear and stepped away, but the Genie kept on approaching him faster and faster.

Kei pulled out his two swords and gave an instruction to the Genie.

“Hey Soldamyr, let’s bring them closer to the ground first.”

At his command, the terrifying genie said

“Yes, Master.”

He answered politely and began to recite an incantation.

“All-freezing winds! Razor sharp ice! Blizzard Storm!”

Blue lights left his hands and transformed the clear blue sky into a whirlwind of ice and powerful gusts of ice-cold winds.

“Kyaa!”

Many harpies fell out of the sky, struck by hail, or by frozen wings.

But the Queen was surrounded by a large number of Harpies and were flying gracefully. Suddenly she

“Ahoouooooooooouhh~”

Let out a low frequency sound wave.

Chapter 060 – Tahrakhan Plateau (5)

The Harpy's song traveled through the air, and Sungjin felt his head go empty.

‘Ah... why is it me...’

But dodging her sound attack was not possible. Sungjin tried to sit and lower himself, but his body looked up instead.

Sungjin tried to look towards the right at Cain, but his neck turned the wrong way; This was the effect of the sound wave of Confusion.

His body looked up when he wanted to look down, and looked to the left when he wanted to look right. Sungjin couldn't help but shout out his name.

“Cain!”

“Grr~”

Cain jumped towards Sungjin like a bullet to protect him.

“Kaaa!”

Several harpies tried to attack Sungjin while he was under the effect of the Harpy Queen's song but were scattered like pigeons

when Cain batted them away with his paws.

“Uryah!”

The Pugilist next to him was busily punching and kicking empty air. It was fast and filled with power, but he couldn't land a hit.

He quickly became bloody due to all the harpies clawing away at him. The strange thing was that no one was running to his aid.

If it was any other team, they should have formed a sense of camaraderie and actively act to help one another, but the other three hunters were busy attacking other harpies without caring. Even while his head was spinning, he could easily tell

‘There's no such thing as teamwork in this party.’

After 6~7 seconds Sungjin felt his senses returning to normal, so he pulled out his swords. The Harpies attacked rapidly from the sky, but Sungjin's swords were much faster.

“Kyah!”

Sungjin quickly mowed down the harpies flying near them, but he could hear the Harpy Queen charging up for another shot.

“Ahoo~~”

“Cain!”

Before Sungjin even finished verbalizing his name, Cain separated from Sungjin immediately. Once Sungjin and Cain were separated by a safe distance, they resumed hunting nearby harpies. The Harpy Queen’s song became

“Hoooo~”

And the song faded away. Sungjin wasn’t the target this time.

‘Who is it?’

Sungjin looked around while swinging his sword. The ‘Treasure Hunter’ and Soldamyr were fighting against confusion while blinking and frowning.

Try as they may, it wasn’t something they could overcome on their own. Sungjin realized this from being hit.

“Kyaa!”

Sungjin called for Cain while facing off against the harpies.

“Cain.”

At Sungjin’s single word, Cain charged towards Soldamyr and bit

his legs. Soldamyr's eyes opened wide.

He stood by the 'Treasure Hunter' who was still asleep standing and fulfilled his order diligently.

'Soldamyr, stay close to that Treasure Hunter and protect him.'

"Paralyzing currents, Electric Shock!"

He fired bolts of electricity towards the harpies that were flying his way. Once nearby Harpies were taken care of, Sungjin looked up to check the queen. The Queen was still floating gracefully in the air.

"Pa!"

Blood Vengeance flew out of his hands. When the Queen noticed the sword flying her way, she nimbly dodged out of the way before the sword even reached the halfway point. Sungjin immediately recalled his sword.

"Haa!"

The sword returned without delay. Once she was gone the rest were easy enough to clean up. But she kept her distance and only used her ranged sound attack.

'She's too far to use any long ranged attacks... how can we fight

her mid-air...’

Sungjin saw the harpy corpses in front of him and got an idea.

“Awaken and become my slave! Rise of the Dead!”

One of the dead harpies raised its head. Sungjin climbed on top and commanded

“Fly.”

The Harpy flew into the air, gaining altitude little by little. It was slower than when it was alive, but this much was fine since he had a hidden card to play.

And riding the Harpy, Sungjin slowly approached the Harpy Queen. Several harpies came to intercept him, but it was already his second aerial combat.

Sungjin cut away at the harpies without much problem and continued to make progress towards the Queen.

Because of the Zombie Harpy’s slow advance, the Harpy Queen was only slowly backing up as well, keeping distance.

‘Your arrogant display of confidence ends here.’

Sungjin rang the ‘Manyata – Master’s Bell’ and then held on tight.

“Go!”

The Zombie Harpy flew forward much faster than normal towards the Harpy Queen. The flock of harpies protecting the queen shouted out in alarm.

‘Kyaa!’

Sungjin stood on top of the Harpy and swung his sword once he was in range.

‘Woosh’

He felt something hit his swords. But because of the speed, he couldn’t tell what he had hit. He ordered his Harpy

“Hey hey! Turn around!”

Only then did the Harpy turn around. Checking the queen, she was untouched; Several of her guards were falling towards the ground.

‘Damn’

The guards were working hard to protect their Queen. Sungjin prepared for another high-speed charge, but

“Ahoo~”

The Queen began to sing. Sungjin had a bad feeling about this one.

‘This isn’t good...’

He was up in the air, and no one was in any position to help him. Confusion and sleep were both lethal in his situation.

“Let’s go! Quickly!”

Sungjin urged the Harpy forward. The Zombie Harpy flew towards the Queen like a bullet but

“Hoooo~”

Queen’s song finished. Suddenly Sungjin’s vision began to whirl; The Zombie Harpy had begun spinning midair while carrying Sungjin.

The Zombie Harpy was spinning so fast that no other harpies could get close, but Sungjin was about to puke from motion sickness.

The Zombie Harpy, still under the effect of the confusion, finally crash landed on the Plateau ground.

“Ugh...”

Sungjin gagged and dismounted the Harpy. There was no damage taken, but it felt terrible. Sungjin called upon Soldamyr.

“Soldamyr.”

He answered from afar.

“Yes, master?”

“Is there a way to bring that Queen closer to the ground?”

“Well... There is one high-cost magic I could use. Due to the consumption, I can only use it once.”

“Ok, go ahead and use it. Once is enough.”

But He heard the Queen’s voice again.

“Ahooo~”

Sungjin gritted his teeth. He was going to try resisting confusion or sleep. But the target wasn’t him. This time the Inquisitor and

the Pirate were affected; This was a great opportunity for Sungjin.

‘Harpy Queen is so irritating as an enemy. And none of the allies are remotely helpful.... I’m going to end this in one go.’

Sungjin immediately put his plan into action. Gripping the Blood Vengeance tightly, he began.

“Baptism of Blood”

Small knives came out of the sword’s handles and dug into Sungjin’s hands. Blood flowed from his hands as a sacrifice for the Blood Vengeance.

Once the Blood Vengeance had a taste of its master’s blood, the blade of the sword emitted a violet light; this was the ‘Baptism of Blood’. The sword caused damage to the master as it explosively raised the offensive power.

He wasn’t sure if it was entirely necessary, but he didn’t want to miss this chance and take up more time. So Blood Vengeance was just a bit of insurance. Once the blood sacrifice was done, Sungjin called for Soldamyr.

“Soldamyr!”

“Please give me a moment.”

Soldamyr glared at the Harpy Queen, who was singing before he began his incantation.

“Invert up and down. Reverse Gravity”

The harpies who were floating high above the ground suddenly lost their sense of balance due to gravity pointing the wrong way. It was the first time when the harpies, who spent their entire lives flying, had experienced loss of balance in the air.

In order to fight against the new source of gravity, they struggled to flap and ‘climb’ with their wings. But ‘Reverse Gravity’ was aiming for this to happen.

Once the gravity returned to normal, the harpies, who were flying to fight against the artificial gravity, suddenly dropped in altitude.

“Kyahh!”

Several Harpies crash landed on the ground with their heads first. The Harpy Queen attempted to reorient herself to the changed gravity once more, but she did not manage to do so before a scary man wielding two swords arrived next to her.

Sungjin didn’t hesitate to swing both of his blades; Blood Vengeance and Moon Specter. Sungjin’s Blood Vengeance with Baptism of Blood enabled had enough power to kill bosses in a single strike.

The Operator gave an announcement.

[‘Harpy Queen’ Laliha Cleared.]

Once the Queen was dead, the remaining harpies quickly turned to run. If this were like any other time, Sungjin would have chased after them, but this time he let them go.

If it was trash mobs, he could kill plenty of them in other raids. Since the raid was complete, Sungjin returned the swords back to their sheaths and returned to the hunters’ side.

The ‘Treasure Hunter’ was without a single mark of injury. Soldamyr had dutifully carried out the order. He looked exhausted as he said

“Master, I am low on Mana so...”

“You’ve done well. Please go rest.”

“Thank you, Master.”

With his parting words, Soldamyr returned to his lamp. Sungjin tapped the shoulder of the Treasure Hunter and said

“The reason why I kept you alive...”

But

“You fucker! You wanna have a go?”

“I guess your only ability is to get mad at those who save your life!”

The Inquisitor and the Pugilist were holding each other by the collar. It looked like a fight could break out at any moment. Sungjin turned to the Treasure Hunter and asked

“Why are they acting like that?”

“Ah...because one of them hit the other too hard to wake up from the sleep...”

‘Are they kids?’

Sungjin couldn’t help but sigh. He walked up to them.

The Inquisitor held his mace high threateningly, and the Pugilist looked poised to throw a kick. Sungjin stared at them for a moment.

‘If they were to become trolls after fighting...’

If the two men were to fight, he could obtain four additional

items. Once he realized this, he no longer wanted to stop their fight.

If they were the type of people to start petty fights with teammates, they deserved to die here and now and go to the Purgatory early. Sungjin stopped his footsteps and stood by like an observer to a caged fight.

Soon

“Woof woof!”

Cain returned to his side and sat down. Sungjin kneeled and matched Cain’s eye level.

“Who do you think will win? I’m curious.”

“Woof”

Because of that, the two men stopped to look at him. They had seen Sungjin’s overwhelming power when fighting the boss, so they couldn’t help but be wary of him.

The two men who were about to begin exchanging blows put away their weapons and stood back up straight. They exchanged stereotypical dialogue.

“You’re lucky you got off easy.”

“Yeah right. You should count your blessings that you got saved this time.”

Sungjin replied exasperated.

“What? No fight?”

The two men did not answer. Sungjin patted Cain's head one more time before standing up.

“If you wanna fight, go for it. The winner will have to fight me though.”

At his words, not only the two men who were about to fight, but the Pirate also tensed up. Sungjin turned to look at the Pirate and their eyes met.

He quickly looked away. Sungjin had no definite proof, but he must have been waiting for some kind of opportunity.

But due to Sungjin's oppressive power, he couldn't bring himself to act upon his wishes. Seeing his actions, Sungjin thought

‘I guess... there are times when I should be hiding my power...’

There was no need to trick people to fight each other, but there was also no need to prevent those who wanted to troll from trolling either.

‘I guess I'll just let it slide this time.’

Sungjin turned around and returned back to the Treasure Hunter who stood away from the rest of the group.

Chapter 061 – Tahrakhan Plateau (6)

Sungjin walked up to the Treasure Hunter and tapped him on the shoulder.

“Hey. Use your Treasure Hunter active now.”

He stared blankly back.

“What...use what?”

He who was showing off about being the Treasure Hunter all this time seemed to be clueless on what Sungjin meant.

“Treasure Hunter active skill. The one you were bragging about at the beginning.”

He finally understood and nodded.

“Ah... ok”

It was clear that he's never used it before. Since he earned it at the end of Kutan Desert, the only place he had a chance to try it out was at the Count Dimitri's Castle Ruins.

But since he didn't recognize Besgoro's skull that Sungjin wore around his head, he had probably only been to 'Wandering Merchant Ruff Han' at most.

If he had found Ruff Han, he would have been able to obtain something great. But as Sungjin watched on, he stuttered as he tried to ask the Operator to activate the skill.

“O...Operator, I’ll use the Treasure Hunter Active. If there is something hidden in the Plateau, please give me a hint.”

Once he finished, the Operator gave the verses.

[King of the Plateau]

[Sitting on a throne high above the clouds]

[Uncontested and out of reach]

[His only enemy was procrastination]

[Offer a gift to defeat his enemy]

[And the King will come]

Another strange verse. Sungjin snapped his hands like usual and said

“Replay.”

But the cube did not respond. Sungjin looked towards the Treasure Hunter and said to him

“Hey, Replay.”

“Excuse me?”

The Treasure Hunter was inexperienced with the usage of the Treasure Hunter active.

“I said, let me hear it again.”

Once Sungjin explained again, he finally spoke to the cube.

“Ah... Let me hear it again. What you just said.”

[King of the Plateau]

[Sitting on a throne high above the clouds]

The cube repeated herself, and Sungjin fell into thought.

‘Throne above the clouds...’

Sungjin looked around. The entire Plateau was above the clouds already. The only place taller than their current location was a round hill at the center of the plateau.

Even before Sungjin thought of the answer, Besgoro commented

‘It must be there, at the place above the clouds.’

When he was running around searching for the edge of the plateau, he had been on top of that hill to survey the area. Although the rest of the plateau had a thin layer of cloud covering the ground like a low lying fog, but that area was completely clear of clouds. It was undoubtedly sitting above the clouds.

‘Well, at least we know the location...’

Sungjin pondered the latter parts of the verse.

“The only enemy is procrastination... and he wants a gift to defeat it.”

He wasn’t sure there was enough hint in the verses as to figure out what was needed to be done. Sungjin decided to ask the Treasure Hunter.

“Do you have any idea what this could mean?”

The Treasure Hunter opened his eyes wide and shook his head. Sungjin let out a sigh and added

“Forget about being a Treasure Hunter and focus on getting stronger first. You’re not even remotely useful in any way.”

Sungjin turned around without waiting for a reply. The other remaining hunters looked completely lost. It appeared that they were still shocked by the Operator's hint function.

Sungjin asked Besgoro

“Besgoro, what do you think? Can you figure out what gift it wants to receive?”

‘Well, I am not sure but...’

It was ironic that the hidden boss of the previous round was working hard to try and figure out the method of revealing this chapter’s hidden boss.

‘I guess the main question is what was he procrastinating?’

“Well, then let’s check out the throne first.”

Sungjin told Besgoro.

‘Okay.’

To the people around him, it would have looked like Sungjin was talking to himself. After finishing his conversation with Besgoro, he turned to face the other hunters and said,

“I won’t touch the normal mobs. If you all have time and ability, try to kill as many as you can. And for the hidden boss...”

As he was speaking, he noticed that the others weren’t paying

attention as they were too busy being on guard against each other; they were filled to the brim with hatred and distrust for one another.

‘They look more like sworn enemies than teammates. They’re going to have a hard time with combat.’

“Forget about the hidden boss. Got it?”

Sungjin shrugged and walked away from the four hunters, leaving them behind. He headed towards the hill at the center of the Plateau. Besgoro commented on the hunters.

‘What do you say you step in and provide leadership to those men? A real man should be capable of rallying other men and give directions. And if you need my advice on anything, just say the word.’

It was a word befitting of a former Knight. Once Sungjin had walked far enough to be out of earshot of the others, he replied

“No, it’s not the right time yet. Further down the line, there’ll be lots of opportunities for me to step in and take control, but it is too early for now.”

‘Is that so?’

“Yes, the timing... I think when only 100 or so hunters remain, I will have to take leadership and actively participate. And when the

time comes, I want you to help me, Sir Knight.”

After being respected as a Knight and as a general, Besgoro laughed for the first time in a long while.

‘I look forward to it. Ka ha ha ha~!’

*

Sungjin diligently climbed the hill. Ghost Stallion, Magic Carpet, even Swift Paw were all on cooldown. So he had no choice but to go on his feet. Occasionally

‘Baa~’

A giant Mountain Goat came attacking to delay Sungjin while climbing the mountain,

“Woof Woof”

Cain called towards Sungjin.

“Hmm? What’s up, Cain? Did you find something?”

But Cain spun around once on the spot and sat down.

“What does that...?”

Sungjin wanted to ask, but he was interrupted when Cain returned to the form of a wooden figurine.

“Ahh...”

He must have wanted to tell Sungjin that his time was over.

‘Okay okay, I’ll understand you next time.’

Sungjin thought as he put the wooden figurine away into the cube. He called the Operator.

“Operator, how much time do I have left?”

[You will return to the Black Market in 48 minutes and 12 seconds.]

“Hmm...”

Sungjin decided to ask another thing of the Operator.

“Operator, give me the Trollseeker Marble.”

A perfectly spherical marble emerged from within. There was a

strange array of light contained within the marble. Sungjin held it up

Tribyre – Trollseeker Marble

Heroic Marble

Active Skill

Pursuit of Justice (I) – Teleport to the realm a troll is residing in. 1 charge stored.

Wrath is one of the strongest motivator available to man.

And then he placed it in his pocket. There was still plenty of time since all the dimensions proceeded at the same rate.

If this dimension had 48 minutes remaining, then all the other dimensions should still have 48 minutes remaining on the clock. It should be nearly impossible for another party to have beaten the Harpy Queen by this time anyway.

And as long as the Harpy Queen was still alive, the chances that a Troll had appeared by now was extremely slim.

After confirming his remaining time, Sungjin leisurely strolled up the rest of the way up the hill.

The ‘Tahrakhan Plateau’ had a better view than any other chapter so far. If there were no monsters, Sungjin would have loved to be able to stay a few days for vacation.

While having these thoughts, Sungjin continued to climb until he finally reached the apex.

‘This must be the King’s Throne.’

Besgoro commented before Sungjin could. Right under the top of the hill, there was a cave opening.

Sungjin jumped and took ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’ out of his chest and cautiously entered the cave. The cave was dark, but he could see well enough with the ‘Ghost Vision’. But

“It’s empty.”

‘I see that.’

Sungjin walked deeper into the cave. The cave was smaller than he had thought. It was about the size of an average apartment unit. It was large for a human standard, but lacking in terms of a throne befitting that of a king.

‘Procrastinate... what is he procrastinating?’

Sungjin snooped around the cave. Within this ‘Throne Room’ there was nothing but skeletons strewn about. Sungjin picked one up.

‘Hmm...’

It was the only clue. Besgoro said

‘Do you think he’s procrastinating obtaining food?’

“Probably.”

Sungjin examined the bone closely. There were many small bones, but a few were quite large.

“Could it be...”

Sungjin dug through the bone pile and discovered a crucial evidence; It was a large skull with short horns growing out of it.

“This bone... it’s neither a Harpy’s nor a Mountain Goat’s.”

‘What is it then?’

“It’s a Giant Buffalo’s skull”

Sungjin checked around for other bones as well. There were no bones the size of Human skulls that could belong to a Harpy, nor a skull with a comparably large and spiraled horn.

The only skull he could find were two additional Giant Buffalo’s skull.

“I think... I figured out what the gift is.”

Sungjin emerged from the cave and slowly climbed back down the mountain.

“Besgoro, please let me know if you see any Giant Buffalos anywhere.

At his request, Besgoro immediately responded.

‘Over there to the right.’

Sungjin turned his head slightly to the right. In the distance was a buffalo of an enormous size. It looked tough and difficult to kill, even if the person killing it was a king.

Sungjin was about to cast magic when he changed his mind.

‘What if I accidentally fry it too much and the King wants nothing to do with it?’

Sungjin pulled out his blade and said

“Ah yes. The offering will be thinly sliced steak.”

Once the Buffalo became aware of Sungjin, it bellowed

“Mooo~”

It bellowed mightily as it charged towards Sungjin. Sungjin nimbly dodged to the left and slashed his sword against the right side of its neck, like a Spanish matador. However, a monster was a monster.

Despite a cut that sunk a third of the way through, the Buffalo turned around unfazed and came charging again. Sungjin dodged to the other side and cut at the neck again.

Once the Buffalo's neck was cut twice, he began to fall; no one could take two of Sungjin's attack to the neck, no matter how tough the creature was. It ran ahead a bit more until it collapsed. Sungjin returned the sword to the sheath and walked up to the Buffalo.

The Buffalo was unbelievably large.

‘A large cow weighs about a ton, right?’

And as he thought as much, he picked up the Buffalo straight up with his bare hands. It was a deadlift that was utterly impossible without status increases done by the Operator.

Sungjin carried the Buffalo over his shoulder and walked back up to the Throne of the King. It wasn't too far from where he had killed the buffalo.

Sungjin laid the corpse down in front of the cave entrance. Now

that he was done, he suddenly had doubts.

“Do you think... this is the answer?”

‘You don’t really have other clues, do you?’

“IF there’s no response after a little while...”

But the Operator gave an announcement.

[Warning! Hidden Boss]

[Manticore has appeared!]

‘Where...?’

Sungjin scanned his immediate surroundings. Then Besgoro said,

‘Up.’

Sungjin looked up into the sky. From the distance, he could see an old man’s head on top of a Lion’s body, and the tail of a scorpion. It was flying through the air with its wings. Sungjin prepared his ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms.’

Chapter 062 – Tahrakhan Plateau (7)

The monstrous Manticore was approaching from afar. Sungjin opened the book wide, and as always, the book depicted tales of ancient heroes. Sungjin carefully read aloud the contents.

“Guan Yu took precaution when he heard the pulling of the bowstrings. But no arrows came flying, so Guan Yu then chased him until the drawbridge without worry. But this time, an arrow did come flying and cut the straps holding his helmet.”

Today’s passage was a little longer than usual.

“It was at that moment that Guan Yu realized that the man had the skill to hit a falling leaf of a willow tree from 100 steps away and that he had been spared.”

While Sungjin was reading from the book, the Manticore reached the top of the hill near the cave entrance and let out a roar.

“Graaah!”

But the book was already shutting itself.

[Seance of Huang Zhong Hansheng activated!]

[Passive Onslaught(IV), Haste(II) applied]

The cube was giving an announcement when the Manticore jumped off the top of the hill to begin an attack on Sungjin. Sungjin tumbled to the side to dodge the enemy's attack.

[Active Skill – [ShinGoong's Bow](#) (I) available for instant cast.]

directly translates to “God of Archery's Bow”

‘ShinGoong's Bow...’

While Sungjin was trying to understand the name of the new skill, the Manticore swung his paws towards Sungjin.

“Gragh!”

The four-legged animals' signature attack was a clawed swipe. But Manticore's attack was several times faster than even Ahenna's. Even with ‘Haste(II)’ activated, Sungjin couldn't dodge and had to block with his swords.

“Clang!”

Each of its claws had the length of Sungjin's swords. Even a graze would cause considerable damage. The Manticore quickly followed up with a left-handed swipe.

“CLANG!”

It suddenly turned its back on Sungjin.

‘Why...?’

While Sungjin was wondering what was going on, suddenly the tail came flying towards him. There were long spike-like needles protruding from the tail; it wasn’t something that he could block with his sword.

Sungjin hastily tumbled backwards. Behind him was a steep cliff, so he intentionally rolled back a few more times. Meanwhile, he thought of the ‘ShinGoong’s Bow’. He didn’t know what it did, but he guessed that it must be some sort of a ranged attack skill. The Manticore gave Sungjin no time to recover.

“Rawr!”

It jumped high up in the sky and flapped its wings. The beast that looked like a lion with wings came flying towards him; a terrible might carried by limitless mobility. It flew at him at great speed.

Along with the Manticore’s blazing fast speed, it came striking down with its deadly claws; The Manticore swiped with both paws simultaneously. It would be challenging to block both at the same time. Sungjin leaned one way and shouted

“Solidify!”

“Booom”

From the front, the sound of Sungjin’s blade clashing against the beast let out a loud noise as

“Creeeeak~”

The solidified mantle creaked against the claws that wrapped around Sungjin; it sounded precarious. Sungjin exchanged glares with the Manticore as they stared into each others’ eyes.

“Grrr...”

The Manticore looked surprised. As if it was thinking

‘There is a Human capable of blocking this attack?’

The Manticore jumped high up into the air and spun around swinging its tail. Countless needles from its tail came flying towards Sungjin.

It was similar to the ‘Ice Orb’ used by the Lich in the 3rd chapter. But this time, there was no Cain to take the hits on his behalf. The ‘Solidify’ was already on cooldown.

Sungjin had no choice other than to lower his profile, and try to block using Besgoro and Freeark.

‘Pi pi pi pit’

The Needles landed all around him. One of the needles got past his defense and pierced through his right arm.

‘Ugh...’

It was a long time since he had last taken damage, and it hurt a lot. The right arm became suddenly unresponsive.

‘Paralysis?’

It was unacceptable to have his hands paralyzed in a fight. Sungjin stood up and immediately took away the status effect.

“Free Ark”

Sungjin’s Chains glowed for a moment, and the Paralysis ended. Meanwhile, the Manticore landed.

“Booom”

It stood on top of the hill and grinned at him.

‘How is it? Does it hurt?’

It seemed to be gloating at him. It began to anger Sungjin, and the Operator began a countdown.

[Seance effects ending in 10, 9]

Sungjin sheathed his weapon. He was initially planning on using it against ‘someone’ in another dimension, but

“Gragh!”

The Manticore came flying at him while flapping its wings. Sungjin held the Blood Vengeance with his left hand as he unsheathed the Moon Specter. He then said

“Ghastly Wail.”

Moments later

“KYAAAAAAAAAAAA~~!!!”

An impossibly loud screech reverberated in the air, much louder than any harpy. The Manticore’s face turned into shock, and then it turned to fly away. It looked disgraceful as it tried to run away.

‘And he calls himself a King...’

Sungjin wanted to keep watching the Manticore’s embarrassing retreat but

[5, 4, 3]

He didn’t have much time left on the Seance. He couldn’t just let it end without trying the skill even once. Sungjin faced the fleeing Manticore and said

“ShinGoong’s Bow”

In response to his vocal command, three arrows materialized and flew off into the distance.

‘Hmm?’

Sungjin tilted his head. He didn't have many chances to try shooting a bow, but the trajectory of the arrows seemed odd. The Arrows were flying slightly to the left of the Manticore's escape path. If things were to continue as is, the arrows would miss entirely.

‘My...’

If he couldn't hit the Manticore with these shots, the fight would devolve into a drawn out test of endurance. Sungjin picked him his swords and began to chase after the Manticore. But Besgoro suddenly said

‘Bull's eye.’

“Grah!”

The Manticore, who was escaping in a zigzag suddenly turned to the left. Besgoro continued

‘All three shots.’

Shortly after, one of the arrows pierced the tail, and the other two landed on each of the wings.

The tail was cut off, and the Manticore could not fly properly anymore.

“Baptism of Blood.”

The Blood Vengeance began to glow bright red, and he continued his chase while also reciting an incantation.

“Binding” Besgoro began to recite the incantation before Sungjin even opened his mouth. Sungjin quickly followed suit and recited the incantation along with him.

“Frost! Frostbite!”

“Binding Frost! Frostbite!”

The two incantations were completed in short successions, and the two sources of the binding spell were applied simultaneously. The Manticore found itself frozen stiff to the ground.

It turned to look back at Sungjin. Its face, which was gloating earlier, was now twisted in terror. Whether or not it was due to the effect of Ghastly Wail or due to its circumstance, Sungjin could not tell.

It tried to move its feet to face Sungjin, but it was too late. Sungjin finally found his chance, and his swords knew no mercy.

Sungjin coated the hill thick with the monster’s blood. The monster who terrorized other monsters and held the title of ‘King

of the Plateau', died while trembling in fear of Sungjin.

[Hidden Boss Manticore Cleared!]

The Operator announced happily. Sungjin let out a sigh.

“Whew~”

No matter how much stronger he grew, the Hidden bosses were no easy foe. Sungjin swung his blades hard to remove the blood from his swords. Besgoro watched the blood fly through the air and commented

‘Good! Excellent! This is it! My blood is boiling! Let us hunt more enemies!’

Besgoro was blood-frenzied, but Sungjin calmly resheathed his swords and asked the Operator

“Operator, how much time do we have left?”

[You will return to the Black Market in 41 minutes and 57 seconds.]

‘Yes, We have plenty of time. Let us give chase to those Harpies who escaped from our fight earlier... There should be more of them! Waste no time!’

Besgoro was thrilled. But Sungjin said

“Wait, Mr. Besgoro. We are going to go somewhere else.”

‘Somewhere else?’

“Yes.”

‘Where?’

“Well... it is going to be this Plateau still... but in another dimension.”

‘Are there lots of Enemies there?’

“There will be enemies. Human enemies.”

At his words, Besgoro became elated.

‘Huumans?! Perfect! Even better!’

It appeared as though Besgoro lived on the battlefield for over forty years for reasons other than Count Dimitri’s orders. Sungjin

responded

“Before we go, I want to do some preparations first. We won’t know who we run into until we get there.”

‘Why do you need to prepare at all? Kei you are strong! Stronger than anybody else!’

Sungjin

“Of course they will be weaker than me... but there might be two, three, even four enemies when I get there. Isn't it better to be prepared for anything than being caught off guard?”

‘Hmm’

Besgoro sounded annoyed, but he didn't argue back. He was fully aware that Sungjin could simply ‘take him off’ if he wanted. Sungjin first checked his HP and MP.

“Operator, how much HP did I lose?”

[You have 46,912 / 49,620 HP]

‘Hmm?’

Sungjin tilted his head. He had used ‘Baptism of Blood’. It drained 1000 HP per second of use. But he had only lost about 3000.

‘I think I used it for at least 5 seconds of the effect...’

Sungjin asked in reflex

“Why?”

The Operator answered diligently to Sungjin’s question.

[HP Event Log]

[Loss: Manticore’s Poison Sting. Blood Vengeance: Baptism of Blood’s active side effect.]

[Gain: Blood Sucker – Lifesteal(II)’s Effect]

‘Ah...’

Sungjin raised his hands to look at the ring with the large blood colored Ruby.

‘Now that I think of it... this item synergizes really well with Blood Vengeance...’

He could use the effects of Lifesteal to counteract the side effects of Baptism of Blood. He wasn’t sure yet, but if he were to fight without taking a hit, he could probably continuously keep the Baptism of Blood active without losing any significant amount of health.

“What about MP?”

[25,641 / 44,050 MP remaining.]

He had used quite a bit of MP. But as expected, he had used less MP than he had thought. It was due to 'Soul Absorption' effect of 'Moon Specter'. Thanks to Moon Specter, he could passively replenish mana through combat without actively trying to refill his mana pool.

Sungjin addressed Besgoro.

"I'll climb down the hill and hunt any monster I run into. It'll take too long to wait for item cooldowns to come back... so I'll go troll hunting as soon as HP and MP are back to full."

"Troll Hunting? You said you're going to fight humans?"

Besgoro was showing his age.

"Ah well... fine... Human."

*

Sungjin held his sword with both hands and cut the back of the Mountain Goat.

“Baa~”

The Goat was quickly cut down by Sungjin’s swordplay. He fought with a single sword for the first time in a long while for the sole purpose of refilling his HP and MP in one go. Sungjin asked the Operator,

“Operator, what’s my MP?”

[44,050 / 44,050 MP]

All preparations were finished. Sungjin mentally prepared himself as he took the ‘Trollseeker Marble’ out of his pocket and held it up. It was the second time he held it in this round, but this was the first time he would intervene with another raid.

Sungjin swallowed back his spit and said

“Pursuit of Justice”

A beam of light fell from the heavens and surrounded Sungjin. The Operator spoke to him.

[Dimensional transfer has been requested.]

[Before Dimensional transfer can be completed, Raid Reward

Distribution must take place.]

[Beginning distribution of rewards.]

Translator's Note:

“ShinGoong's Bow”.

Original KR is 신궁. This could actually refer to a human who has god-like ability (not western idea of one omnipotent God, but polytheistic Korean traditional image of lesser god [like 산신 Sanshin]) with a bow. The name Shingoong literally means “God” “Archery”. But that's misleading because you don't get the subtext and the cultural reference.

Note on Romance of the Three Kingdoms Quote:

Huang Zhong is one of my favorite heroes from Romance of the Three Kingdoms. Mostly because the stories of his deeds with archery are so ridiculously exaggerated. And his character stats, in Chinese historical simulations where he makes appearances, is EXTREMELY high.

By the time he becomes a relevant character in Romance of the Three Kingdoms, he is already at an advanced age and is already considered a hero of the city he defends, ChangSha. The history departs from Romance of the Three Kingdoms here. History says that he simply urges his Governor to surrender, and the surrender is accepted. But in Romance of the Three Kingdoms, he is sent to duel against Guan Yu (2nd sworn brother of Liu Bei). In the first round, he is easily knocked off his horse by Guan Yu's attack. However, Guan Yu does not believe in trickery and foul play in

duels, so he pauses the duel and assists Huang Zhong back onto his horse so that they can have a fair fight.

Between the 1st and 2nd round, Huang Zhong receives an order from the Governor to use his world famous archery skills to kill Guan Yu during the Duel. Guan Yu charges at him, but Huang Zhong runs. He does not wish to kill the man who has proven to be virtuous. But Guan Yu does not wish to stop. So he fires a shot to warn Guan Yu not to follow him, accurately and precisely cutting only the strap of Guan Yu's Helmet. Guan Yu realizes that it was HE who was being spared.

This part, where Huang Zhong fires a warning shot, is the passage described in the quote.

When Huang Zhong returns, he is charged with treason for refusing to obey a direct order from the Governor and is sentenced to execution. But Wei Yan intervenes, inciting the peasants to rebel to protect the hero of the city, saying that ordering the death of the city's hero is nothing short of betrayal against the people and deserves to be punished. Huang Zhong is spared, and the Governor is killed. The city surrenders to Liu Bei's forces.

In order to fulfill his loyalty to his ex-governor, he feigns illness and refuses to join Liu Bei, but once Liu Bei personally visits him, he is convinced of Liu Bei's virtuous and saintly personage and is convinced to join his faction.

Later on during the war against Wei (Cao Cao's country), Huang Zhong overhears Liu Bei whisper 'what can an old man do anyway...' and is enraged. He storms out with his men, and

charges against an impossibly fortified enemy position. He duels against several enemy heroes, pushing deeper and deeper into the enemy territory despite various allied heroes trying to dissuade him until finally he is shot in the shoulder by Ma Zhong. Liu Bei laments that this occurred due to him carelessly saying something offensive, and Huang Zhong dies while Liu Bei watches on.

Chapter 063 – Tahrakhan Plateau (8)

The Operator began reward distribution.

[Monsters Slain. Harpy: 42. Dire Mountain Goat: 13. Dire Buffalo: 8. Total 6140 points.]

[Boss Monster Slain: 'Harpy Queen' Laliha: 900 points.]

[Hidden Boss: Manticore: 900 points.]

[Final Point count: 7940. Distributing points.]

[Your contribution is 71.2%. 5653 Stat points, 5653 Black Coins awarded. Raid Clear Bonus 2500 Stat points and 2500 Black Coins awarded. Item effect 'Additional 10% gained' activated. Distributing 8153 Stat points and 8968 Black Coins.]

The number of Coins he had earned in the last chapter was 8050. Taking into consideration of the inflation between rounds, he didn't obtain all that much due to not reaching 100% completion. But it did not matter.

Because from this point onward, he would obtain much more from hunting trolls than from the Raid Rewards.

[And now we will distribute the items.]

[Armantine – Spear of Paralysis]

[Diora – pants of compliance/obedience/accommodation*]

[Enhancement Stone]

[Recovery Potion – Medium X2]

‘Hmm?’

The Operator gave two rounds of congratulatory messages.

[Congratulations! You have obtained the Legendary Item ‘Armantine’!]

[Congratulations! You have obtained the Legendary Crafting material ‘Enhancement Stone’!]

Sungjin stared at the items before him for a moment. A spherical orb with small jagged deformities rolled around. Sungjin picked it up.

‘Did this item drop this early in the raids?’

He recalled seeing his first Enhancement Stone after at least ten chapters last time. But it didn’t matter; Since Sungjin was almost fully equipped, it was better to get this than a useless Heroic Tier Item.

Sungjin placed all the items into the cube as he thought to himself

‘Should I power up the Moon Specter first? Or go with Blood Vengeance like last time?’

The Cube continued with the reward distribution.

[Last but not the least, you will be awarded titles you’ve earned on this raid.]

It was much faster to receive rewards alone than when receiving it as a group.

[Blue Magician – Increases Blue magic effects by 20%]

‘Ooh...’

Sungjin was honestly surprised. It was the first time for him to receive a title specific to mages. He must have qualified for Blue Magician title due to frequently casting Chain lightning and Frostbite.

Of course, he didn’t need it immediately, but from what he had heard from before, there were lots of extremely powerful mage specific titles.

‘Titles like Spell Master...’

Sungjin concluded his thoughts on the titles for now.

[Distribution has ended. Request for Dimensional transfer has been granted.]

[You will be teleported in 10 seconds. 10, 9]

The Operator began her trademark countdowns, and Sungjin uneasily shifted his weight while waiting under the beam of light. The thought of fighting other Hunters made him anxious.

‘There shouldn’t be anyone more powerful than me but... Like how a [Lion hunts a Rabbit](#), I need to give my all. They are evil people.”

Sajabakto 사자박토 狮子搏兔 [shī·zi bó tù] – Chinese saying ‘Even a Lion puts his everything into properly hunting a rabbit’. As in, no matter how easy or trivial it seems, one should do it earnestly to avoid making careless mistakes.

[4, 3, 2, 1, 0]

The countdown finished, and the pillar of light grew even brighter. Sungjin closed his eyes. And then

He opened his eyes when the Operator gave an announcement.

‘Hmm?’

Sungjin was standing exactly on the same spot.

‘What happened?’

Sungjin turned around. There should have been a corpse of a Mountain Goat behind him from refilling his Mana but

“Baa”

A live Mountain Goat was standing in its place. The Mountain Goat came charging at him. Sungjin effortlessly cut off its head and surveyed the area around him. He was certain that he was in a different place; he had successfully entered a different dimension.

‘So... there is a troll somewhere in this dimension...’

Sungjin pulled out his swords and began to roam the Plateau.

‘High-Level Guard’ ferociously swung his spear. Luckily, the tip of the spear caught the Harpy Queen’s talons. He shouted,

“Now!”

And in response,

‘Pew~’

Someone fired a shot and

“Incinerate everything in your path! Fire Ball!”

Someone fired a spell at the same time. Once hit by the arrow and the spell, Laliha

“Kyaa!”

Screamed in pain. And the one tasked with finishing her off was another man who appeared out of nowhere. He wore white turban over his head, and he jumped high up into the air and onto the Queen’s back.

Landing, he stabbed her in the heart. The Operator gave an announcement.

[‘Harpy Queen’ Laliha Cleared]

“Haa~”

“Whew”

Everyone let out a sigh of relief. And then they congratulated each other.

“Good work.”

“Good job.”

“Can’t believe we beat it”

“Mhmm.”

Only four of the men were congratulating each other. One of the five was silent; he had been ripped apart to pieces by the Harpy Queen. The hunters briefly turned to look at him.

One or two of them gathered their hands and gave him a moment of silence. But no one spoke to him. And once the brief moment of silence ended, no one turned to look at him.

It was because they felt guilty about his death. As the raids progressed, countless teammates perished until now.

Too many died to mourn all of them. So the only thing remaining was the feeling of guilt.

‘It was my fault he died.’

They couldn’t help but feel this way, and so the Hunters found a way to cope. After all, whether it was the tank, the dps, or the support, it was partially their fault that a team member had died.

So the common evolution of thought was to then think

‘I’m glad it’s not me.’

It was the same for the ‘Armored Soldier’ Max O’Brian. He was the tank for the team, but the Japanese man (he already forgot his name) had stood too far from him to avoid being hit by the sound waves.

So when Max was hit by the sound wave and fell asleep, he woke up to the Japanese man already torn to pieces. The other teammates understood this and would not blame him for the death of the Japanese man.

After shifting blame away from himself, he turned away from the corpse and drank his potion. Since the boss was slain, it was time to go hunting surviving mobs to collect additional contribution points.

If there was time after killing the boss and more than three members were left alive, then the surviving members of the team should continue hunting for additional contribution points; This had become common sense. Everyone valued each and every status points and coins they could obtain.

“Let’s go hunt the remaining mobs, shall we?”

At the Indian ‘Assassin’ Atman’s suggestion, the French Halbardier ‘Guard’ Adrian and the English ‘High-level Sniper’

Mason consented.

“Then, let’s go. We need every point we can get.”

Max paused from drinking his potion to speak to his teammates.

“Wait... let’s take a quick break first.”

“Sure, I am getting low on MP anyway.”

The remaining hunters waited until their HP and MP were replenished and then re-entered the hunting grounds. Although they were down by one person, they were confident in their ability.

It was because they were able to defeat the boss without much difficulty. (Although one died, but losing only a single member to the boss was considered to be a good outcome)

Pulling was ‘High-level Sniper’ Mason’s job. His precise arrows landed on Dire Mountain Goats, Dire Buffalos, or on Harpies from a considerable distance, and expertly brought single enemies at a time to the team.

Since the four hunters only faced one or two mobs at a time, hunting was quite easy.

‘Pew’

Mason's arrow hit a Dire Mountain Goat and lured it in.

“Baa~”

Adrian shouted once the Goat got closer

“Binding Frost! Frostbite!”

Affected by the freezing cold crystallizing ice at its feet, the Mountain Goat gradually slowed down. Max watched the Goat advance even closer and then lifted his shield high and shouted

“Steel Body!”

Metallic material seeped through the shield and coated his entire body. Shortly after, the Mountain Goat reached and charged into him.

“Clang!”

The combination of Adrian's spell and his own active skill nullified all damages. Once the Charge was halted, Atman and Adrian poured their attacks onto the stationary Goat.

Atman was proficient with short and sharp knives. He was so dexterous that he could counterattack harpies while dodging them.

Max had always fought in the front, and could easily tell how rewards would be distributed.

When he thought of the rankings in his head, the Operator often confirmed his guesses. In fact, he was good enough to even guess their general percentages.

‘Since the guy has good offensive power and spells... 1st place with about 35% contribution?’

He believed that Atman would easily receive 1st place with an extremely disproportionate rate of 35~40% of total contribution level. Atman was certainly skilled and strong enough to do so.

Adrian and Mason were both weak, far weaker in comparison to Atman.

‘Atman should be first, me second, Mason 3rd... Adrian on the 4th?’

He guessed the order of contribution levels. While the four of them were fighting the Mountain Goat,

‘Pew’

Mason’s arrow flew past the three hunters and missed its target. Missing in of itself was not too uncommon. By this chapter, most

archers were skilled, but in the beginning, archers had missed more often than being able to land a hit.

The problem was that the arrow flew off into the distance and landed on a Dire Buffalo.

“Baa~”

The Mountain Goat was still alive and kicking. The Buffalo became enraged and

“Mooo~”

Began to charge towards the Hunters. The cooldown for Steel Body was not over yet. No one could block the Buffalo’s charge yet. Max shouted

“Get out of its way! Dodge it!”

At his words, the hunters scattered. Max faced off against the Goat alone as he stepped backwards. The Buffalo came charging towards him. He was in mortal danger.

“Veil of Darkness, cover their sight! Blind!”

Atman’s magic glowed brightly. The Buffalo became blind; it tripped and fell on its own.

“Good job Atman!”

Atman quickly ran to the Mountain Goat and shouted

“Quickly! The Spell won’t last long!”

But

‘Pew~’

Another shot was fired. Max had thought that Mason had aimed to hit the fallen Buffalo. But

“Kyaa!”

It hit a Harpy in the distance.

“What are you doing?”

He shouted to which Mason replied with an apology.

“Sorry!”

‘Do you think a sorry is going to suffice right now?’

Max was becoming angry, but he couldn’t help it. He had to face against the Dire Mountain Goat alone, and now a Harpy was on its way. The Buffalo regained its sight and stood back up.

The only good news was that Atman had taken off his Turban and managed to stab the Goat in the heart. Now only two enemies were remaining.

Max turned to face against the more threatening Buffalo when he heard an incantation being recited.

“Binding Frost! Frost Bite!”

Max had believed the spell was meant to try and reduce the Buffalo’s running speed. But

“Hmm?”

His feet were stuck to the ground. He was frozen in place.

“What?”

When Max was about to turn to look at Adrian,

“Ahhh!”

Atman was hit by the Buffalo and gored on its horns.

Chapter 064 – Tahrakhan Plateau (9)

Max shouted loudly.

“Atman!”

Atman was on the ground after being run through by the Buffalo. After just one hit, he was almost unconscious; But he was not dead yet. Max shouted to request help from his other teammates.

“Hey! Grab their attention real quick!”

He had not realized that the two behind him were intentionally pulling more monsters and interfering with the fight to sabotage him.

Adrian and Mason glanced at each other and nodded; Trolling was a more delicate process than others realized.

They needed the help of the monsters without putting themselves at risk of being accidentally killed alongside their allies.

As arranged earlier between the two, they ran forward to assist Max who was fighting two large enemies at once.

“Ah so sorry... I totally missed there.”

‘You think you can just wave it all off with a sorry?’

Max wanted to scream at him, but he held himself. He knew saying something like that was not going to help the situation. The other two cooperated in taking down the Harpy and the Dire Buffalo. Meanwhile,

‘Pew~’

Mason’s bow sniped the Harpy out of the air. Only the Buffalo remained. But even the buffalo became worn down by Max’s blade and Adrian’s spear, that it steadily lost health until

“Mooo~”

It cried and fell over. Once the hunt was over, Max immediately ran to Atman’s side.

“Atman! Are you alright?”

Atman was barely able to groan.

“Ugh...”

It wasn’t too late. He had taken a fatal blow, but he was not dead yet. It was then

‘Pew~’

Max heard Mason's bow let loose an arrow and he turned to look. Mason had aimed for the helpless Atman. Max turned his body to protect Atman quickly.

'Stab'

The arrow embedded itself on his back.

"Ugh!"

Even Max understood that these two had been intentionally luring more enemies than they could handle, but it was too late to change anything.

Adrian was already upon him brandishing his spear.

'Woosh!'

His spear came flying towards Max. Max just barely deflected the shot. The moment his spear made contact, Adrian's Cube gave a message.

[You have attacked your fellow Hunter. Entering 'Troll' state.]

[Hunters in 'Troll' state receive 10% penalty to Raid Rewards.]

[And in the event that the Troll is killed by other hunters,]

[It will not inflict the ‘Troll’ state on the attacker.]

Adrian heard the message but didn’t bat an eye as he continued to swing his spear. While blocking the incoming attacks, Max understood

‘Ah, this isn’t his first time!’

Then,

‘Pew’

Mason let loose another shot. The spear came from the front and arrow from the side. He blocked the spear with his shield and tried to deflect the arrow with his sword. But the arrow had not been fired towards him.

“Atman!”

Max tried to stop the arrow, but he missed. Mason’s arrow found its mark on Atman’s forehead and punched through.

“You Bastards!”

Max was filled with fury and angrily swung his swords, but Adrian nimbly jumped back and shouted an incantation.

“My path shall be consumed by inferno. Blazing Step!”

Each step he took caused fires to erupt. Max wanted to chase after Adrian, but couldn't due to the flames.

“Damn it!”

As he was swearing, Adrian fired a spell his way.

“Incinerate everything in your path! Fireball!”

They were insidious. Max lifted up his shield to block. From the other side,

“Cobra Snipe!”

Mason's Active skill came flying at him. Max first blocked the Fireball with his Shield.

‘Boom!’

There was a large knockback from the impact, but thanks to the expensive and high quality shield, it reduced the damage to almost nothing. Max then tried to deflect the flying cobra with his sword. Max had seen this skill before.

It was a skill that sent a live cobra flying in the place of an arrow

which bit the enemy upon arrival, dealing damage and inflicting poison. The problem was that he had only seen how it was used against the Harpies.

The moment his sword nearly reached the snake, the cobra followed up the length of the sword towards Max

“What?”

And as he was shouting out, the cobra bit him on the wrist.

“Ugh...!”

He nearly let go of the sword in excruciating pain. But

‘Stab!’

Adrian’s Spear pierced through his left thigh.

“Ahh!”

Max screamed out loud and swung his sword wildly. Adrian predicted the counter attack and jumped out of the way before Max could reach him.

“You...mother...fuckers...!”

No matter how much he swore and insulted them, it was useless. Mason fired a shot from afar, and Adrian recited spells. Max backed off as he tried to cope with the two men's ranged attacks.

He wanted to run away, but his injury to the thigh prevented him from being able to walk normally. Hopping and staggering, he tried to turn and run.

But

‘Pew~’

Another arrow flew and lodged itself in his left shoulder.

“Ahh!”

Max screamed in pain as he tried to drag himself away, but there was no way he could outrun the uninjured Adrian. He ran up and stabbed Max’s right leg as well.

“Uugh!”

He cried out loud.

“Where do you think you’re going?”

He could hear mockery in Adrian’s voice. Max fell to his knees and collapsed. He couldn’t use his legs anymore. He saw it; the premonition of his impending death.

The goal of the two traitors were the contribution points, and they had initiated an attack against him intentionally. There was now only one possible conclusion. As Adrian and Mason approached him, Max tried to drag himself away using his arms.

Then he ran into someone. It was Atman's corpse from before. Anger bubbled up inside Max.

"How could you... just minutes ago we were comrades..."

But Adrian and Mason began to grin listening to his words.

Max wished he had something like a Grenade to take them down with him, but he had nothing at his disposal to pull it off. He had no power to do anything.

And so in the last moments, he closed his eyes and made a prayer.

"Hear me, God; I fear no death. But I pray that those two sons of bitches die a miserable end."

Once he was done, he shouted to his assailants

"Do your worst, scum!"

But Mason and Adrian were looking slightly above Max into the distance. They must have seen something. Adrian was the first to speak.

"What is that?"

Max turned to see what they were looking at. Behind him, he saw

an ‘Adjudicator’ wearing a flaming skull over his face while holding a sword in each hand.

The ‘Adjudicator’, in his terrifying form, looked in turn at the corpse of Atman, the still bleeding Max, and the traitors Adrian and Mason.

It seemed that he was reconstructing what was going on. Adrian and Mason were also trying to figure out the situation.

Although the person before him wore a flaming skull over his head, it had the overall shape of a human with the title of a hunter. He even had his own Cube following him around. There was no doubt that he was a hunter.

It was a hunter they had never seen before. That was their main point of confusion.

‘He wasn’t there at the beginning... was he?’

Until this point, seeing ‘someone else’ aside from ‘the original five members of the raid’ was unheard of. Adrian raised his spear and asked

“Who... Who are you?”

The ‘Adjudicator’ turned to face him. They could see a human’s eye deep inside the skull. The eyes looked sharp. And locking his eyes with Adrian’s, he walked closer.

He didn't know much about this man, but he was definitely hostile. Adrian demanded

“Hey, Stop!”

But despite asking the other to stop, he tried stabbing with his spear. He thrust the spear straight towards the guy's throat. It was the fastest and the most lethal strike he could have done.

But even before the spear reached close to the man's body, he tilted his head slightly and moved out of the way, dodging the strike. With just this interaction, Adrian could guess just how powerful his enemy was.

‘This guy is trouble!’

He was even stronger than Atman who had been hunting Buffaloes and Goats almost singlehandedly. Adrian turned to run as he recited

“Blaze Step”

He began to retreat while leaving a burning path behind him. Adrian looked behind to check and gasped; The skull clad Adjudicator paid no attention to the flames and chased him through the burning path. Adrian quickly called Mason.

“Mason!”

Mason did not need to be told what to do; he was already pulling on the string, readying another shot. It was obvious that the man would come after him after dealing with Adrian.

Mason aimed for his heart and let go of the Arrow.

‘Pew!’

The arrow rose high in the air. It was flying straight and true towards the Adjudicator’s heart but

‘Whooosh’

He knocked it out of the air as if he knew exactly where it would land without letting up his chase against Adrian.

‘What?’

The Adjudicator paused for just a second, but continued to otherwise chase Adrian. Mason changed his target; he aimed lower towards the moving legs.

It would be more difficult to deflect the arrow with his swords. He nocked an arrow on the bow and took an aim. But, the skull recited a spell on its own.

“Become a tame sheep”

It was an older sounding voice.

“Polymorph.”

‘Eh?’

Was what Mason wanted to say, but the sound that escaped his lips was

‘Baa~’

The sound of a sheep crying. And while he was stuck making sheep noises, the ‘Adjudicator’ swung his swords cutting off Adrian’s legs.

“Ahh!”

Adrian fell to the ground. He had tried to turn and swing his spear to keep distance but

‘Woosh woosh’

With a simple swing of the Adjudicator’s sword, Adrian’s spear was effortlessly cut into three pieces.

“P...”

Adrian wanted to say something, but the Adjudicator showed no mercy; He unhesitatingly cut off Adrian’s head. Mason saw the scene and thought

‘What?!’

Now that he noticed, he was back to his human form again.

When he realized this, the Adjudicator was already heading towards him. Mason quickly nocked the arrow on the bow and pulled. But the Adjudicator recited an incantation.

“What is real is fake and what is fake is real! Illusion.”

He split into five. Mason fell into a panic.

‘Which one is real?’

But he had no chance to try and think this through. Five terrifying figures of a man wearing a burning skull was approaching him. He aimed towards the nearest skull-man and fired a shot.

‘Please die!’

‘Pew~’

The arrow flew straight and true, landing on the forehead of his target. But once it came in contact with the skull-man, the figure disappeared with the slight warping of the space. The arrow continued through and landed on the ground in the distance.

It was a fake. He quickly reloaded another shot, but the quiver which should have been standing upright was standing at a 45 degree angle.

‘Hmm?’

Mason was puzzled by his quiver’s strange position, but then he saw his hand fall; severed from the wrist. Pain quickly followed.

“AHHHH!”

Mason grabbed his stump of a hand as he screamed. The man with the flaming skull walked ever closer.

Chapter 065 – Tahrakhan Plateau (10)

Mason yelled as he screamed out in pain from losing his arm.

“What the fuck! Who the fuck are you?”

The man with the flaming skull mask paused, and pointed at the title above his head with the point of his sword.

‘Adjudicator’

Since he understood speech, he was definitely not a monster. Mason placed his hand over his heart as he said

“Ye...Yes, Adjudicator. I mean, Sir, I just wanted to live. I only did those things so I can survive.”

As he bought himself time, he tried to think as quickly as he could. The boots that he wore were the Boots of Emergency Escape. It could launch him more than ten meters into the sky and help him escape.

‘If I can just get an opening...’

As best as he could,

“Think about it... if I didn’t increase my contribution points from early on...”

He discreetly picked up dirt with his unharmed hand.

“I have a family in the Purgatory.”

He aimed for and sprayed the dirt towards the skull mask, especially towards the eyes. But the Adjudicator knocked the dirt out of the air with unbelievable reflex.

He didn't have time to be amazed by the Adjudicator's reflexes. He was about to invoke the 'Emergency' function when

“Snake Eye”

The necklace he wore suddenly opened its eye. When Mason's eyes gazed into the terrifying snake eye staring from within, he found himself petrified.

“Emerg...”

His tongue got stuck in place. The Adjudicator calmly walked forward as he began to speak.

“He, who for his own benefit”

Slowly, very slowly, he raised his blade.

“Steals what is not his”

The Paralysis was over. He immediately cried out

“Emergency!”

But before he could hop away, the ‘Adjudicator’s blade swung down. It cleanly cut him in half. Blood splashed out from his wound. Mason heard, with fading consciousness, last of the Adjudicator’s words.

“You, and everyone like you, are enemies of mankind.”

*

Max watched from afar whilst hugging himself. He had watched the whole thing from beginning to end. At the last possible moment when he had given up hope, the Adjudicator appeared from nowhere.

And, with his superhuman swordsmanship and flashy magic spells, took down two trolls without so much as an injury.

Max had seen countless hunters until now, but this was a whole new level, something beyond what he would believe to be human; His magic and swordplay both. As Max witnessed the spectacle before him, he thought to himself

‘Hear me, God; I fear no death. But I pray that those two sons of bitches die a miserable end.’

He believed that his prayers must have worked and that the Skull-masked man was a messenger of God; a deliverer of Divine Justice. He who befits the name of Adjudicator.

The Adjudicator gave some sort of last words to Mason and then executed him.

Strangely, whenever the Adjudicator killed a hunter, some of the items that the hunters wore copied itself and dropped before him.

The Adjudicator picked up the items and put them into his cube. This was an unnatural course of event; Normally the items owned by another hunter couldn’t be separated from their owner, even in their death. Max felt as if some sort of miracle was in progress.

‘He’s different from the others.’

While Max concluded his thoughts, the Adjudicator finished picking up the items and putting them away. He turned towards Max and approached him. Max looked up to him and asked

“...have...You come to answer my prayers?”

But then the Adjudicator ripped off the mask. Inside was an extremely young Asian man, having an irritated look.

“Why are you so annoying”

Max couldn't help but shut his mouth.

*

Sungjin had to take off Besgoro's Helmet. The battle addict had been acting up each time Sungjin killed someone

‘Nice! Kill him!’

‘Yeeaah!’

‘You're the best, Kei!’

He kept on shouting in his ears. Even when he finished collecting items which appeared as a result of ‘Adjudicator passive’ and made his way towards the last hunter, he asked

‘Who's that guy? Another prey?’

‘No. He's a victim.’

‘He's weak anyway! End his life here!’

He was making unreasonable demands.

“Be quiet”

The lone survivor tried to tell him something when Besgoro interrupted.

‘Why! How can I be quiet?! I haven’t been so riled up in such a long time!’

Besgoro’s elated voice washed out the hunter’s words. So Sungjin took off Besgoro from his head.

“Why are you so annoying”

He was an old man, but he was slightly insane. Sungjin understood how Count Dimitri might have felt.

No matter how much renown his soldier accrued under his service, having a crazy old man demand the hand of his daughter would have driven anyone to order an execution. Once Besgoro was removed from his head, the color and saturation of his vision returned to normal.

Sungjin looked up into the endless sky of the Plateau and took a deep breath.

“Whew...”

But he felt an intense stare on him. The last survivor, the white man, was looking up at him. His eyes were full of wonder.

Sungjin looked down at him. The man was bleeding from his legs.

“Are you alright sir?”

He looked to be 30~40 years old; a much older man than himself. He only nodded without speaking. He was a tank so he should be conscious of his HP level.

“Ah, I’m glad to hear that.”

Sungjin tried smiling after. Once he ‘intervened’ in this raid, he was able to obtain four new items from two trolls. It was a good haul.

Most of the item he received appeared to be at least Heroic Tier. Sungjin estimated his earnings for this round.

‘I should consider each of them to be worth at about 4000~5000 coins... and then if they get bid on during auction....? No wait, I should first check their specs before I decide on their worth.’

But the man interrupted him with a strange question.

“Are you... an angel?”

Sungjin tilted his head. Did he lose his mind from being betrayed by his teammates? Sungjin responded.

“An Angel? Do I look anything like an Angel?”

“Well then... how did you... come here?”

The survivor couldn't understand how more than five hunters could have been summoned to the same raid. But there was no reason why Sungjin needed to explain him that. The cube interrupted the conversation on time.

[All Trolls Eliminated. Returning to the Black Market in 3 Minutes.]

The ‘intervention’ must be designed to end as soon as the trolls are dead. Sungjin decided to give him some advice rather than answering his question.

“I cannot stay here so.... I can't protect you. For the remaining time, please hide somewhere away from the monsters, collect your reward and return safely to the Black Market.”

He was an extremely lucky man. Not only did he survive in a hopeless situation to be saved by Sungjin, but he was able to

monopolize all the points for this round. But the Survivor replied to him.

“Excuse me... You saved my life... How can I repay this debt?”

Sungjin was about to shake his head and say, ‘it’s fine I wasn’t doing this to get something out of you anyway’, but then the ring on his hand caught his eye.

A ring in the shape of two coiling snakes; ‘Ring of Helricks – Ring of Warlord’

‘This is only 3000 Black Coins. Go ahead and buy it for now.’

Said the strange Merchant in Darker than Black and bid him to buy it, but the ring would be difficult to use to its full effect.

Reign(I)
<p>Receive 1 White Coin from those who, knowingly and of their own free will, kisses the ring.</p> <p>Those who kiss the ring receive a permanent 10% loss to all future Raid coin rewards.</p> <p>Can only be used once per person.</p>

It was the only way to earn white coins for now, but because of

the harsh penalty, it was not something he could easily ask of anyone. When he noticed the hesitation in Sungjin, he asked

“Please go ahead and ask anything. Thanks to you, I was able to obtain a second chance in life.”

Sungjin hesitated a bit more before he finally decided to ask

“This might sound weird, but would you be willing to kiss this ring? But...”

The survivor didn't even try to listen all the way before moving to kiss the ring. Sungjin withdrew his hands. He could have let the man do it as is, but it did not sit well with his consciousness.

Sungjin resumed the explanation as clearly as he could.

“In return, you will face 10% permanent loss to all future raid Coin rewards. Do you still accept?”

At his explanation, the Survivor froze. Sungjin nodded.

‘I thought so...’

Even though Sungjin was his savior, having to give up this many coins from now until the end would be a difficult burden to accept. But, the survivor decided to ask

“If you can answer one question for me, I would gladly do it still.”

Sungjin replied

“What is it?”

“Knowing that I will receive such a penalty, why are you asking me to kiss the ring?”

Sungjin considered how he should respond.

‘To obtain the White Coins.’

But if he mentioned the white coin now, he would have to make an endless explanation about the ‘Darker Than Black’ among other things. After Deliberating, he decided to answer

“I have a [Sa Myung](#).”

사명 Sa Myung

I didn’t feel comfortable translating this with a close english equivalent.

It means, obligation, mission, duty etc. It means it’s something he must accomplish, it’s like he has a burden.

However, there is an important subtext that’s missing. 사명 literally translates to “Mission to the Death”, a mission he must accomplish no matter what, no matter the cost, even at the cost of his life. I didn’t feel that there was a satisfactory English

equivalent that could convey how important he felt this mission was to him.

I tried ‘obligation’ but that felt like it was forced on him.

He’s basically declaring he’s prepared to die on behalf of all of humanity. As opposed to all these half-baked hunters wishing to save just their loved ones and family, or just themselves.

It is disappointing that I couldn’t find an English word to come even close to what this Korean word means.

“Sa Myung...?”

“Yes. You probably recall at the last visit to the Hunter’s Hall, if someone manages to finish and clear the final raid, all of humanity would be freed from the purgatory and would be revived... As you can probably see, I have grown stronger as a result of being transplanted in different raids.”

What he actually meant by transplanted was the ‘Restart’, but he couldn’t say that.

“I cannot tell you everything yet... but if you were to kiss the ring and grant me my request, I can guarantee you that it will contribute a great deal towards ending the raid and saving humanity.”

As soon as Sungjin was done explaining, the Cube gave another announcement.



[Returning to Black Market in 1 minute.]

The survivor took a moment to think, but he eventually nodded.

“I understand. I will deal with the 10 Percent penalty and kiss your ring. Since you say this will save humanity, I want to beg of you to allow me to be able to kiss the ring.”

His words were filled with earnest feelings. Sungjin offered the hand with the Ring of the Warlord to him. The Survivor kneeled respectfully and kissed Sungjin’s Ring.

The Survivor’s Cube was first to give an announcement.

[You have granted “Reign” to another individual. Your coin rewards will permanently decrease by 10%.]

Next was Sungjin’s Cube.

[Obtained 1 White Coin as a result of ‘Reign(I)’ effect.]

And with her announcement a White coin materialized in front of him. It was of the same size, shape and weight as the Black Coin. The only difference was the color.

Even for Sungjin, it was the first time he had seen it. The Survivor stared at the coin in wonder as well. Sungjin held the Coin up as he asked the survivor.

“What is your name?”

“Max... My name is Max O’Brian.”

‘Max...’

Sungjin kept his name in his heart. For the first time, he was about to reveal his real name out of gratitude.

“My... N”

But the man grabbed his hand. It was a large and hairy hand.

“Sir Adjudicator... please become even stronger and bring an end to these raids. In the Purgatory... My wife and daughters are waiting for me.”

As he said this, his eyes grew red. Sungjin had nothing to say. He held the survivor’s hands in his own.

“Please believe in me. I will do it, I swear to you.”

The Operator began a countdown.

[10, 9, 8, 7]

Sungjin held his hands until the countdown completed.

[6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0]

Once the countdown was over, Sungjin was returned to the Black Market.

Chapter 066 – Black Market Seventh Shopping

Once Sungjin returned to the Black Market, he entered the First Drop as was tradition.

“Honey Milk Tea please... and a suitable snack to go along with it.”

“Understood, Mister Hunter.”

“Ah, and can you get me a pen and a notepad?”

“Right away.”

The Panda Man brought a pen and paper first. Sungjin picked up the pen and began to write. There was a lot to do today.

“Operator, How many Black Coins do I have?”

“You have 10,268 Coins”

Sungjin put the number down on the top of the sheet and then asked

“Please take out all the items I obtained today.”

A pile of items was ejected from the cube.

Depending on preference, some people would start with the best; others would start with the worst and wait until they get to the good part.

Sungjin was part of the latter group. He picked out the least appealing item; the Helm.

Steel Helm of Fire Resistance

Rare Helm – 34% defense

Passive Skill

Fire Resistance(1) – Reduce damage received from all fire type attacks.

It was the item dropped by the Spearman troll. Sungjin spun the pen around his finger.

Rare item was usually priced between 500~5000 coins, and he had to pick the suitable amount to put it on the Auction house.

Selling for too low was obviously a loss, and pricing it too high would prevent it from being sold.

‘It is only rated at rare, but the defenses are high... and the fire

resist isn't a bad passive to have... it's not 'amazing' but somewhat usable.'

Sungjin wrote on the memo 'Steel helm for 1000 start, 1500 instant purchase'. He moved onto the next item; a spear.

It was an ordinary looking spear. Sungjin picked it up without much thought.

Vaiden – Spear Of Entrapment

Heroic Spear – Strength A Dex C

Active Skill

Fiendish Needle(I) – reveals a hidden blade from the spear. Enemies pricked by the blade move according to the Spearman's will for 1 second. Effective period 10 Second, Cooldown 5 minute.

The greatest joy in life is taking away another's freedom
And having him do as I please – Tyrant Amnar the 2nd

'Hmm? It is a Heroic Item?'

Unlike how it looked, it had great stats. Sungjin held the spear up and said

“Equip”

And he tried the active skill right away.

“Fiendish Needle”

And from the center, knives spread out to the side.

‘Fwoof’

The blades pointed outward radially. It was a vicious and intimidating looking array of sharp edges.

‘So if I were to use the active while having enemies impaled by these...’

It was painful to even imagine. He had very little expectation from it, but it was better than what he had expected.

He could use it from some distance, and either pull enemies in or push them away. It had a good strategic use, especially if there was good synergy with teammates.

‘He had something this nice, and he decided to go trolling...?’

It was a very effective weapon for the purpose of trolling. Sungjin put down the spear and put down the price; 3500 starting price,

4000 instant buy.

“Mister Hunter”

Xiu Ran had returned with the Milk Tea and snacks as requested. Sungjin took one sip of the tea.

The sweetened black tea’s aroma, mixed with the soft milky texture soothed Sungjin’s tension.

“Mmm~”

Sungjin enjoyed the sensation as he picked up the next item. Next one was the shoe of the archer.

Emergency Boots
Rare Shoe 18% defense
Active Skill
Emergency(II) – Fly 20 meters into the sky. Falls gradually.
Cooldown 10 minutes.
The freedom of soaring through the air

The winged shoes looked nice, but the effects were so-so. The effect itself was not bad; it would be useful for a mage or an archer.

The less flexible the item, the less value it holds. Sungjin quickly wrote ‘Winged shoes, 700 starting price, 1000 instant buy.

Next was a bow.

Hydra – Bow Of Cobra

Heroic Bow – Strength A Dexterity D

Active SKill

Cobra Snipe (I) – Fire a live Cobra.

The live cobra dodges obstacles and bites the target to apply poison. The poison deals ticking damage up to 300% of a regular shot. Cooldown 5 minute.

A cobra, chasing down its prey.

‘Hmm...’

It wasn’t bad item on the surface. Problem was that archers poured all their resources into obtaining good bows; It may seem like a good thing, but they were already 7 chapters in.

Although a majority of the hunters wouldn't have been able to obtain a heroic weapon until now, Archers wouldn't be one of them.

Sungjin wrote 'Snake Bow starting price 3000, 3500 instant buy'.

Now that he checked his total, he had about 8200 minimum and 10,000 maximum income that he can expect from the items. Taking into consideration that one round of transportation only cost 1000 coins, it was an enormous return on investment.

When Sungjin took a look at the amount he thought

'I am going to get rich quick'

Considering that he received 8968 coins from the previous Raid, it was like doubling his income. In terms of comparing to a 'normal' hunter, it was like receiving 4~6 times the amount they would have gotten.

It was only possible because there were two trolls in a single raid. Sungjin whistled as he checked out the other items one by one.

Diora – Pants Of Feather Fall
Heroic Pants 34% defense

Passive Skill

Feather Fall(II) – Reduces falling damage.

Beauty is welcomed everywhere.

Sungjin stared at it as he held it in his hands; It was decorated by what appeared to be Harpy Feathers.

‘This is totally not my style...’

Also, he couldn’t come to like the passive ‘Feather Fall’.

‘Just when would this be useful?’

Sungjin tilted his head, wondering. But he decided to wear it since he had no protection below.

“Equip”

He wore the pants. It automatically shrunk to fit his legs.

‘Well... Since I will start ignoring normal mobs... it could come in handy when trying to buy time...’

Sungjin decided to leave it as is. The last item was a familiar looking spear. It was a grotesque spear in the shape of the

Manticore’s tail. Unlike other items, it was a ‘Legendary Tier’ weapon.

Armantine – Spear Of Paralysis
Legendary Spear – Strength SS Dexterity C
Passive Skill
Paralyze(II) – Enemies hit by this spear are paralyzed for 0.3 seconds.
Active Skill
Poison Sting(II) – Fire a volley of needles from the spear. Cooldown 10 minutes.
Manticore poisons its prey, not only to paralyze them, but to make the meat softer.

As expected of a Legendary Class weapon; it was an amazing item. It easily rivaled Blood Vengeance or Moon Specter in specs. But Sungjin could not use it due to it being a spear.

‘Just how much should I charge for this?’

Sungjin continued on his delightful dilemma.

*

Once Sungjin was in the auction house, he handed the items over one by one, reading out the prices he had written on the notepad.

“Ah, those boots start at 700, 1000 instant buyout. Hydra starts at 3000, buyout at 3500.”

“Understood. Boots of Emergency starts at 700 instant buyout at 1000. Hydra starts at 3000 and 3500 instant buyout. Is this correct?”

Sungjin nodded and at the end, he asked

“Did any legendary Tier items get put out for Auction?”

To which the pigman replied

“Just one.”

Sungjin opened his eyes wide.

‘There’s someone who’s selling a Legendary Tier Item? Already?’

“Really? Please show me.”

The Pigman pushed forward his cube. And from the cube, an

information page popped up.

Name	Tier	Type
Armantine	Legendary	Spear
Starting Price	Buyout Price	
10,000	15,000	
Sold by		
Adjudicator		

The auctioneer rubbed his hands as he asked

“If you’re interested in it, would you like to see the specs?”

Item was Armantine, sold by Adjudicator. Sungjin replied while holding his forehead.

“That’s the item I just handed to you.”

“Ah, is that so?”

Some of the NPCs at the Blackmarket were unintelligent like this from time to time. Sungjin still took the time to verify how much it was being sold for.

‘Starting Price 10,000, Buyout Price 15,000’

Sungjin had pondered over the price for a great deal of time. But in the end, he decided to put it at a high price. Even if it doesn’t get sold immediately, someone would eventually come to buy it in a chapter or two.

After verifying the item was properly registered with the correct amount of money, Sungjin said

“Thank you. Please send word if the items get sold.”

“Of course, not a problem.”

Once he was done thanking the NPCs, he left the auction house. As he expected, no one else was in any position to sell a legendary tier item. It would be unthinkable; legendary tier items this early on were irreplaceable treasures.

Once he was done working, he returned to his friends waiting for him at the ‘Ninety Nine Nights’.

*

“That was some great Indian food. Thank you Dalupin.”

Dalupin bowed deeply. Sungjin had feasted on Tandoori Chicken.

“I’ll be going to bed now.”

“Woof woof!”

Cain answered him.

“Let’s have a discussion tomorrow about multicasting, Soldamyr.”

“Yes, Master.”

Once he was done speaking to Soldamyr, he returned to his bedroom. The room was already dark.

He didn’t take very long at the dinner, but he did spend much more time at “First Drop” than he’s done before, checking out a larger list of items.

Sungjin lay in bed and stared at the ceiling. In a few moments, Dalupin would come by with a receipt if any item at the Auction house were sold.

It would be beating the dead horse at this point but; the more coins you had, the better. Money was power, especially in this world.

‘I wonder how many were sold.’

Sungjin called the Operator while lost in thought.

“Operator”

[Yes, Sir Hunter.]

“Give me the White Coin.”

The white coin came from within the Cube. It was of the same shape, size, and weight as the black coin. Sungjin stared at the coin for a while.

‘In order to overcome the system set by this world... You need the ‘Power of God’.’

The Merchant at Darker than Black had told him.

‘Please become even stronger and bring an end to these raids.’

He recalled the words of the survivor from the intervened world. Sungjin stood up and prepared to shower. He would have to wake up early tonight.

Chapter 067 – Black Market Seventh Shopping (2)

Sungjin finished his bath and emerged from the bathroom. Shortly after

“Knock knock”

Dalupin gently knocked on the door. He was apparently aware that Sungjin had completed his bath. Sungjin answered while wiping down his hair with a towel.

“Come in”

He could hear the door open from behind him.

“I have brought the information sheet for tomorrow’s raid as well as receipts for items sold in the auction house today.”

Sungjin pointed towards the table next to the entryway without turning and said

“Please leave it on that table, Dalupin. And please don’t forget to wake me up in the night.”

“Understood.”

Sungjin heard the door click shut behind him. Once he was done wiping his hair, he headed over to the table and checked the things Dalupin left behind.

There were four receipts in total. Sungjin picked up the first receipt.

Receipt – 1200 Black Coins

The item ‘Helm of Fire resistance’ which you had put on auction was sold for a total of 1200 Coins to the ‘Pugilist’.

Place the receipt into the cube to instantly redeem the amount.

He had posted the item for a starting price of 1000 and instant buyout at 1500, and it had been sold somewhere in between.

‘Not bad’

Sungjin placed the receipt into the cube.

[You have received 1200 Black Coins]

Sungjin checked the next receipt. The bow ‘Hydra’ containing

the skill ‘Cobra Snipe’ was sold for the starting price of 3000. Someone had placed a bid and obtained it without any contest.

‘As I suspected... the demand for bows is low...’

Sungjin also put the receipt into the cube. The next item was “Vaiden”, the spear with Fiendish Needles. It was put up for 3500 coins with an instant buyout at 4000 coins. But someone opted for the instant buyout in this case.

‘Hmm...’

It was technically a good thing when someone opts for the instant buyout. But it gave him mixed feelings.

‘Should I have sold it for more?’

This was probably a common feeling afterwards. Sungjin inserted the receipt into the cube and took a look at the last one.

‘Hmm?’

He was surprised when he read the content.

Receipt – 3000 Black Coins

The item ‘Manta – Cho’Roch’s staff’ which you had put on auction was sold for a total of 3000 Coins to the Offensive

Mage.

Place the receipt into the cube to instantly redeem the amount.

It was the item he put up for auction two chapters ago and had forgotten about. After being available for auction for two days, someone had finally placed a bid on it and got it at the starting price. The buyer's name was 'Offensive Mage'

It was about the right time for mages to begin appearing. The 'Spellmaster' Ed had sometimes said this;

'At first, it is extremely difficult to invest into Mind Power and Magic Power, but as time goes on, you learn that doing so is extremely efficient. Of course, in order to grow stronger, good items and expensive high class spellbooks become necessary to purchase.'

Sungjin also placed the receipt into the cube.

[You have received 3000 Black Coins]

The two items still available for auction were the Rare class 'Emergency Boots' and the Legendary class Spear 'Armantine'.

The Emergency Boots wouldn't appeal to the general populace,

and the Armantine would be a financially intimidating to purchase at 10,000 coin price point, even if it was very attractive.

Even Sungjin, who kept 70% or higher contribution every single raid, did not receive more than 9000 coins in any given raid.

For a typical Hunter, they would need to save up everything for two raids to be able to afford it.

‘Well, it is a great item... so it should eventually sell.’

Sungjin asked the Operator as he finished up his thoughts.

“Operator, how many coins do I have right now?”

[You have 21468 Black Coins]

In one raid, he had obtained more than 20,000 coins. At this point, he could even afford the ‘Star of the nameless’.

‘I thought it would take me at least two raids to reach...’

Sungjin went to lie down on the bed once he was done with the receipts. He would be busy later at ‘Darker than Black’.

“Ha~”

Sungjin arrived in front of ‘Darker than Black’, letting out a thick white fog from his mouth due to the cold. It was too dark in this area, so Sungjin took out Besgoro.

“Equip”

He wore the helmet over his head. ‘Ghost Vision’ allowed Sungjin to see more clearly in the dark. Besgoro spoke first.

‘...You’re going back in there again?’

“Yes, from now on I will be coming here every night. You said it’s no big deal.”

He seemed to have regained sanity on his own after a while. He replied seriously

‘I just don’t like the atmosphere of that place. Even a ghost like me feels spooked by that place.’

Sungjin didn’t reply and just swallowed. Sungjin had experienced death before, but for some reason, the merchant inside inspired fear far greater than death.

While Sungjin was watching, the surrounding suddenly grew

even darker; it was 4:30 am, it was time to enter.

“Please remain quiet while I am negotiating a sale, Besgoro.”

‘I have no intention to speak in that man’s presence.’

Sungjin entered ‘Darker than Black’ wearing Besgoro’s skull. As always the man inside was sitting at a table within.

“Welcome. So, did you find the TrollSeeker Marble useful?”

Sungjin nodded.

“More than I ever imagined.”

“So how many Black Coins do you have?”

Sungjin was about to answer when his own cube responded on his behalf.

[21468 Black Coins]

Sungjin couldn’t help but be surprised and looked back and forth between the man and the cube. It was the first time he had witnessed the cube responding to someone other than the ‘owner’.

In response

‘Shink’

Sungjin drew his blade and pressed it against the man’s neck.

“Who are you?”

He responded

“You want to know? I’ll tell you if you hand over 10,000 coins.”

Sungjin was about to take him up on his offer when

“White ones”

He was interrupted. 10,000 white coins. That was almost an impossible amount to gather. When Sungjin stared at him with narrowed eyes, the man placed his hands over the Moon Specter and said

“Put this away. You know this already, threats don’t work in the Black Market.”

Sungjin stared at him a bit longer and then put away his sword. He was right. Sungjin crossed his arms when the man said

“You managed to gather more than 20,000 Black Coins in one Raid... Extraordinary. Did you come to buy this then?”

He lifted up a star shaped accessory with a spiral design. It was none other than ‘Star of the Nameless’. Sungjin stared at it for a moment before asking the man,

“Last time you said ‘He who searches for answers finds questions, and he who searches for questions finds answers’.”

“Yes. I wasn’t the one who came up with it... but well I quoted it.”

“I have a question.”

“Go ahead.”

Sungjin placed the ‘TrollSeeker Marble’ onto the table as he continued.

“Can more than one of these be used per raid?”

At his words, the man grinned widely. As if he was waiting for this question to pop up.

“Yes.”

Sungjin did not hesitate to say

“Buy two more, recharge the used one.”

At Sungjin’s words, he suddenly replied politely.

“It will be 21,000 Black Coins dear customer.”

“Purchase.”

At his word, the Cube lit up brightly.

[Purchase complete]

The Operator announced, and Sungjin picked up the marble that he had put down on the table. It regained the bright colors which indicated it was ready for use once more, becoming indistinguishable from the other two marbles he had purchased.

Sungjin put away all three marbles he had purchased. From now on, he would be able to meet a minimum of three trolls per round. The man commented

“Kill the trolls and gather more coins. A good idea, but.”

When Sungjin stared with his eyebrows raised, the man continued.

“You’ll be pressed for time. If you want to teleport to another dimension, you’ll have few minutes of buffer time in between.”

Sungjin was fully aware of this.

“I’ll work around it.”

At his words, the merchant grinned.

“Since you used 21,000 coins out of 21468, I guess this is goodbye. There is nothing you can buy with only 468 coins here.”

Sungjin tilted his head and responded instead

“No, there is one.”

“What?”

The merchant blurted out surprised for the first time. Sungjin took out the white coin from his pocket.

“I got a white coin.”

The man looked at the white coin with his eyes wide. Suddenly

an information page appeared from the cube.

White Coin

Ordinary Currency

Passive Skill

Exchange(II) – Item used as an intermediary in buying and selling

Coins obtainable only through truth and honesty.

Used in the purchase of special items.

It didn't feel good, someone else using the cube forcefully. Seeing the item, the man whispered

“Real...”

Sungjin grinned this time.

“What, did you think I would paint a Black Coin white or something?”

“Really... Unexpected. So, what are you looking to purchase?”

Sungjin was about to ask for the ‘Holy water of Baptism’ when he got an idea.

“Is there anything else other than the ‘Holy Water of Baptism that I can get with the White con?”

The merchant answered.

“Yes.”

“What else is there? Please make me a list.”

“To your question, you can obtain the list if you pay about a hundred Black Coins.”

Sungjin frowned. He just did whatever he wanted. Sungjin decided to just buy the Holy Water of Baptism for now since he was curious as to its effects.

“Then please give me the Holy Water of Baptism for now.”

“Got it.”

The man took out the vial out of his pocket and placed it on the table. Sungjin asked one more time before he completed the transaction.

“So... with this item, I can speak with other hunters, is that right?”

“Not only speak... you can do much more.”

Sungjin just stared at him. This mysterious man did not reveal all the information at once, although there were no ‘lies’ either.

Sungjin handed over the coin personally and said

“Purchase”

Once he was done with the transactions, he returned to the ‘Ninety Nine Nights’ and entered his bedroom. On top of the table next to the door was the information sheet that Dalupin had left behind for him.

‘Information pertaining to Rudala – Dark Elven City’

Sungjin was going to read through it when

“Yawn...”

He couldn’t suppress a yawn. He was still not used to waking up at the crack of dawn. Sungjin held the note for a moment as he deliberated. Then he made up his mind.

‘My rest is more important than this information.’

Convincing himself of his lie, he jumped back into bed.

Note: The trollseeker marble stores 1 charge which allows him to transfer once between dimensions. For more transfers, he needs to recharge which costs 1k coins and can only be done by the merchant at Darker than Black. I think many readers must have thought that he can use the same marble again and again but that is not the case, he can use it again but he needs to recharge through the merchant. So if he wanted to intervene in more raids he needed to have more tablets coz he can't go to the merchant during the raid. So now he has 3 tablets so more troll hunting yay^^

Chapter 068 – Dark Elven City

Sungjin opened his eyes. The ceiling came into view.

‘Uh...’

He was just going to close his eyes for a moment, but he had overslept. Sungjin quickly stood up to look out the window. The sun was high up in the sky of the Black Market.

“Operator, how much time do I have left until the Raid?”

[1 hour 21 minutes 21 seconds remaining]

It wasn't too late. He could still have breakfast and prepare for the raid. Sungjin first allocated his stats.

“Allocate 2000 to Strength, 2000 to Dexterity, 1000 to Endurance, 1000 to Magic Power, and 2153 to Mind Power.”

[Applied.]

“Show me my stats.”

Title: Adjudicator

HP: 61120 MP: 68800

Strength 9674 8412 (+1262)

Dexterity 10457 9093 (+1364)

Endurance 6112 5315 (+797)

Magic Power 3587 3119 (+468)

Mind Power 6880 5983 (+897)

Unallocated Points: 0

Sungjin saw the status window for the first time in a while. His growth was coming along well. Despite receiving only half of the Master Hunter Passive, his Dexterity was still over 10,000.

His stats were high enough to assassinate any ordinary Hunter with ease. The only problem was making sure not to become overconfident and underestimate his opponents.

Especially since the skills attached to equipments become more important than the status themselves. In order to maintain this level of overwhelming superiority, Sungjin needs to collect Coins diligently.

Once Status allocation was done, Sungjin stood up and picked up the information sheet on his way down to the dining area.

“Dalupin, please make me...Abalone rice porridge for breakfast.”

“Understood.”

Once the breakfast was ordered, he sat down at the nearest table. Cain came by and wagged his tail. While Sungjin was greeting Cain, Soldamyr came to greet him as well.

“Have you slept well, Master?”

Sungjin motioned for Soldamyr to come closer.

“Come here for a sec. We need to discuss about our plans for the next chapter.”

Soldamyr came closer upon request. Sungjin asked

“I think we need to beat the Raid faster than ever before... Is there a good method?”

Soldamyr tilted his head and asked

“Faster?”

Yes. We’re fast now, but even faster.”

Soldamyr stroked his chin. Since he didn’t have an opportunity to experience jumping dimensions, he didn’t understand why

Sungjin was chasing for an earlier clear time.

Sungjin took out the three ‘Trollseeker Marble’ from within as he explained.

“I want to be able to clear the boss and hidden boss in the shortest time possible and then intervene in other raids.”

Soldamyr picked up one of the marbles.

“Ohh...”

Even without the help of the Operator’s status window, he seemed to know the effects of the Marble. It was as expected of Kutan’s best Mage. Sungjin picked up the ‘Information Sheet’ and had a look at it.

Information pertaining to Rudala – Dark Elven City

Boss Monster – ‘Mayan Priestess’ Kerenis

Time limit: 1 hour 30 minutes.

“Time available for this raid is only 1 hour and 30 minutes. Even if we can defeat the boss and the hidden boss within 30 minutes, it only leaves 20 minutes per realm. If you consider the time it takes to find and kill the trolls, it’s a fairly tight schedule, don’t you think?”

Soldamyr replied

“Can’t you just mow down the enemies as you have done thus far?”

“I could, and I have been until now. But now I want to minimize the time as much as possible. Even for me, I can’t help but use up time when dealing with normal mobs.

Soldamyr listened to Sungjin silently. Sungjin continued.

“And considering the effort that goes into killing normal mobs, it’s an inefficient use of time in terms of contribution points. Trying to fight multiple enemies without the help of item actives and spells take too long. But at the same time, those things should be saved for when I face Bosses, Secret bosses, or Trolls in other Dimensions. Right?”

Soldamyr nodded. Even if Sungjin had a monster of an advantage over the other hunters, trying to ‘sweep’ normal mobs without any help of items or spells would take a little bit of time.

“So in the end, I want to figure out a way for us to move the most efficient way possible. Understood?”

“Hmm...”

Soldamyr stroked his beard. Sungjin gazed down as he continued.

“And... as you saw in the last raid... If I kill all the mobs, I cause unintentional collateral damage. Since I will end up monopolizing all the resources.”

Soldamyr raised his eyebrows. His behavior seems to suggest ‘but you were fine doing so until now’. Sungjin felt obliged to say

“The reason why I monopolized all the points until now is because I had to grow strong enough to be able to make a difference. And to be fair, hunters who can’t make it to the top 0.01%...”

Sungjin swallowed before he continued.

“...don’t have enough proof of future potential. So I monopolized all the points knowing it would give heavy disadvantages to everyone else on my team... but this point forward I want to consider the big picture and help the hunters.”

Sungjin rolled the marbles on the table as he continued.

“Since I obtained a brand new income mechanism, I no longer have the need to monopolize everything. It would be more beneficial to spend that time hunting trolls instead.”

Soldamyr nodded again. He was a being of extraordinary intelligence and did not need additional information to

understand.

“So, is there any way we could speed up the chapter clear time without causing problems for others?”

At his question, Soldamyr responded

“What about... assassinating the boss?”

“Assassinate? How?”

Soldamyr began chanting an incantation without further explanation.

“Walk the dark no matter the light, Shadow Walk”

A dark ‘light’ source appeared on his hand and shortly after Cain vanished.

“Hmm?”

While Sungjin was surprised, Soldamyr explained

“It is a black magic which can hide the presence of creatures in shadows. If you can reach a shadow within 5 seconds, you can maintain invisibility indefinitely. Otherwise, the spell effect wears off”

As he was speaking, Cain reemerged from invisibility. 5 seconds must have passed.

“If you use this as you move about... you could probably reach the boss without having to fight even once. If you do so, you’ll shorten the time needed to finish the raids without affecting everyone else’s contribution levels, am I right?”

Sungjin nodded. As long as it was not ‘kill x number to summon’ type boss, he would be able to pull off the assassination. And luckily the next boss ‘Priestess Kerenis’ was the ‘wait at a certain location’ type boss.

“But in order to do that... you would need to cast the magic from the very start.”

“If you don’t use any other spells, you can maintain the invisibility for up to 30 minutes.”

Sungjin nodded, but stopped and said

“But I can’t use this method every chapter. It’s too much of a loss of my power since it means that you won’t be able to assist me in battles much at all.”

Soldamyr lowered his head at Sungjin’s subtle praise.

“Then... if you visit the spell shop, you can find a higher rank magic called ‘Invisibility’. Because it is white magic, I am unable to cast it but... With your level of Mana, you should be able to use it without problem.”

“Hmm...”

Sungjin nodded and looked out the door towards the ‘Black Market’ in the distance.

Last time before he died, he had been to each of the five types of magic shop in order to sell Spell Scrolls. Sungjin looked towards the general direction of the Spell shop as he said

“Yes... until now I didn’t have any spare Coins to buy myself Spell Books outside of ones dropped by the bosses but... Now I should have surplus of coins, so it is a good time to start investing in Spells as well. I’ll make sure to visit the spell shop after the next raid. Please give me advice on what spells would benefit me most when we get there.”

Soldamyr gathered his hands and bowed as he answered.

“Understood, my Master.”

Having his master be interested in his area of expertise must have pleased him. The moment the conversation with Soldamyr was over...

“Excuse me sir...”

Dalupin asked. Sungjin turned to look at him. He was waiting a few steps away with a steaming bowl held on top of the tray he was holding onto. It was the Abalone rice porridge he had ordered.

“I know you are busy coming up with strategies but... if you wait too long, the porridge will lose its warmth and flavor...”

Dalupin carefully explained.

“Ah, please serve it now.”

Sungjin quickly accepted the dish.

“Thank you Dalupin. I’ll enjoy it.”

Dalupin bowed once and then returned to his spot. Sungjin picked up a spoonful of porridge and took a bite.

Perfectly sticky rice, scattered green onion and carrots, and the small shrimps of the porridge worked harmoniously to enhance the flavor. However, the main ingredient of Abalone rice porridge is obviously the Abalone slices.

‘Plenty of Abalone’

Dalupin always diligently accommodated Sungjin's taste in food. The feeling of Abalone hidden within the rice gave it a pleasant chewing experience.

“Mmm~”

Sungjin mindlessly spooned away at the food. Meanwhile, the cube suddenly made an announcement.

[“Ra – Golden egg shook once”]

It was a strange announcement. Sungjin put down the spoon he was holding and reread the announcement.

‘Ra...?’

Now that he thought of it, it was an item he had received from the previous raid. The hidden piece Golden egg. Sungjin paused his meal to ask the Operator

“Operator, let me see the egg.”

The Golden egg emerged from the Cube. Sungjin checked the egg as he picked up the spoon again.

‘...I don't see any visible changes...?’

Sungjin held it up with his left hand. The Operator displayed the information window.

Rajen – Golden Egg

Heroic Egg

Passive Skill

Tremor of Beginning(II) – Will Tremble twice a day

The being sleeping within

Has not yet decided to be patrician.

‘I feel like something has changed from before...’

But it didn’t seem useful yet, so Sungjin checked the egg over one more time and then returned it back into the cube. There wasn’t much time left before the Raid starts. He resumed shoveling food into his mouth.

Inside the dark cave, white magical sources of light floated around. The orbs of light illuminated the gray structures of the city which were built vertically up into the cavern walls, where the buildings were constructed in steps like the arrangement of pinecone seeds.

Among those many buildings,

“KIIII~”

An eerie screech reverberated in the air. The place Sungjin arrived was the underground Dark Elven City. The Operator gave an announcement.

[Welcome. This place is called the Rudala – Dark Elven City.]

[It is one of the smaller cities built by the Dark Elves.]

[But please be careful. A closed off community like this]

[tends to harbor ill will against outsiders.]

Sungjin tilted his head left and right to stretch himself out.

‘Finish both bosses in 30 minutes and spend 20 minutes per realm for trolls.’

Sungjin was pressed for time like never before. He breathed in deeply to prepare himself.

One good part was that he already knew where the hidden boss is hiding. Even with ‘Adjudicator’ equipped, he would be able to find both of the hidden elements in no time.

Sungjin took a moment to reminisce about the past. This was the

first chapter he had come across the hidden boss at that time.

‘And... I almost died there.’

Sungjin couldn’t help but grin. He pulled out both of his swords.

‘Let’s see how much things changed... I can’t wait.’

Chapter 069 – Dark Elven City (2)

[Synchronizing Hunters]

Sungjin held his swords as he watched the hunters appear. ‘Iron Wall’, ‘Commissioned Officer’, ‘Green Mage’, and ‘High Level Swordsman’. This time every single title was excellent.

It was due to the fact that only the strong were able to move forward in the raids. The first person Sungjin looked at was the ‘Iron Wall’. He seemed to be a short Southeastern Asian man, but he had a sturdy build.

The ‘Commissioned Officer’ was a white man with a longsword hanging from his side. He was even taller than the tank ‘Iron Wall’. He possessed a sharp gaze.

The ‘Green Mage’ was a man from India.

He wielded a metallic Staff and was quite muscular. Sungjin wasn’t sure how he came to master Green magic, but it’s quite likely that he had used combat staff techniques until then.

Since no matter how high the initial value of Mind and Magic power one started off with, no one could nonchalantly walk the path of the mage from the start.

So most mages would have had to start off with a weapon and transition gradually to a true mage class. Just like Sungjin had. The last one was the ‘High Level Swordsman’ who was an East Asian as well.

Everybody took a look at the other. They checked to have an idea of what each person could do, and what specializations they could potentially have. Also, to see if anyone had the potential to become a Troll.

Once 3 seconds of silence had passed,

“Let’s introduce ourselves”

“Let us begin with the introductions.”

The ‘Commissioned Officer’ and the ‘High Level Swordsman’ had simultaneously made the same suggestion. They locked eyes. The ‘Commissioned Officer’ spoke first.

“My name is Allerimo Romanelli, Italian.”

Next was the Green Mage.

“Sanjiv Wali, India.”

While everyone was introducing themselves, Sungjin checked ‘Jasepit – Holy water of Baptism’ inside his vest. Clear fluid was

splashing about inside the bottle.

‘I can bestow a title...’

Sungjin had no idea what effect the title would have, but it was an item outside the bounds of common sense. Sungjin returned the item back into his vest.

‘Well... I should first see if anyone is good enough to make a connection with.’

But he had to be extremely careful about who he would use it on. The ‘White Coin’ was extremely difficult to gather. People like Max Obrian were an exception and not the general case.

Because even if they are saved, selfish people will make selfish choices.

“I am Liwei, Chinese.”

Sungjin noticed something during the ‘High Level Swordsman’s’ indifferent introduction; Black handle, red scabbard, shortish length of the blade.

‘He has Blood Vengeance!’

The swordsman held the same sword as himself. To be fair, it wasn’t that unusual since anyone could buy Blood Vengeance from

the 'Black Market' at the 'Last Edge'.

'But because of the Active Penalty... not everyone can really utilize that sword properly...'

'Baptism of Blood' drained 100 HP per second. Even Sungjin, who had a higher HP than most tanks, still didn't dare use the active thoughtlessly. The swordsman must be extremely confident of his skills.

This gave Sungjin a thought.

'...Yeah, it's about time everyone managed to get at least one Legendary Item.'

Sungjin fell into thought while he stroked his chin. This was an important realization; the possibility that each of the trolls owned a legendary item. If they all had legendary items with incredible skills like 'Kamram', 'Moon Specter', 'Besgoro', Sungjin would probably be okay with 1 on 1, but 2 on 1 or 3 on 1 would present real danger.

Sungjin recalled the 'Enhancement Stone' he had received in the previous chapter.

'The time has come... to take the next step... Spell scrolls are one thing but...'

Sungjin was interrupted from his thoughts when he realized that

everyone's gazes were focused on him. It was his turn for a dishonest introduction. Sungjin turned his attention to the other hunters and said

“Well... to be fair, these introductions have no meaning...”

Now only those who were used to the system remained. It was about time Sungjin became honest about his intentions.

“I will hunt the boss monster alone and then leave. Please work together as a group and increase your contribution level through normal mobs.”

One by one, the hunters tilted their heads at his words.

‘I will hunt the boss monster alone.’

‘And then leave.’

It was hard to understand what he meant by that. Despite their confusion, Sungjin said

“In the chance that I notice anyone with brilliant talent before I leave the chapter, I will speak to them alone... or something.”

The Green mage was first to respond.

“What is this about? What do you mean by going alone? You won’t stick with the party?”

Sungjin bit his lower lip before answering

“Yes.”

As a response, the ‘High Level Swordsman’ pulled out his Blood Vengeance and pointed the blade threateningly towards Sungjin.

“What are you? A Troll?”

It was a sensitive response. He must have had to face a difficult battle against trolls in his previous rounds. Sungjin replied back.

“Not a troll... just think of me as ‘someone different’. I don’t think you’ll be disadvantaged by my actions since I’m just going to do my own thing and leave.”

The High level Swordsman got red in the face as he yelled

“How is that not being a ‘troll’ you fucker!”

The ‘Commissioned Officer’ broke his silence and joined in as well.

“Yes, your action is basically in line with that of a troll. A raid

can only be completed by the cooperation of five hunters, but here you are insisting that you will be going alone. If that isn't words and actions of a troll, what is?"

The Italian man seemed to be unaware of a 'system designated troll'. It was possible that people didn't know too much detail about trolls yet. Sungjin sighed at their words.

"Well... I think you won't understand it yet, but you'll have a better understanding towards the end of it. That my method will be safer and more rewarding for you all."

Finally, the Operator gave an announcement.

[Raid will begin in 1 Minute.]

Sungjin walked forward towards the starting line of the Raid, which was a major intersection that led directly into the Dark Elvan City. He wanted to save every second from the Raid timer.

"Hey! Stop!"

Sungjin heard the High Level Swordsman call out. He ignored him and walked on. Finally

"You bitch!"

The High Level Swordsman couldn't stand it and charged towards Sungjin with his Blood Vengeance drawn. Sungjin glanced at him; he was fast. But only in terms of 'ordinary' hunters.

Sungjin decided to humor him. The swordsman's method of fighting was interesting. First, he began with a straight thrust

'Clang!'

The swordsman used the rebound from the collision of swords to launch a counter attack. If it was any other hunter, this technique would have caught them off guard, but

'Bang!'

Sungjin easily blocked the counter attack. And this time, followed through and launched his own strike.

'Boom!'

Three strikes were exchanged. The Blood Vengeance the swordsman held flew out of his hands and was embedded in the ground behind him. The Swordsman trembled.

"How..."

Sungjin glared at him.

“I told you. I am a special existence.”

“What kind of stupid...”

The Swordsman backed up as he began to stutter after losing his grip in three strikes. His appearance reminded Sungjin of the Trolls who begged for forgiveness.

Seeing that, Sungjin felt like pranking him.

‘... Now that I think of it.... Should I just let him hit me a few times and have him enter troll state?’

Then there was a chance where the other Blood Vengeance would become his. But Sungjin erased such thought from his mind right away.

‘Forced Troll state’ was as damaging to the hunter community as ‘Trolling’. If he partook in forcing troll state on others, he would never be able to gather white coins which required absolute trust in one another.

And from experience, people who forced too many people into troll state were recognized as a ‘Troll’ by the system and automatically put into troll state without attacking anyone.

‘Well... Even though I took care of him for now... he did actually

try to kill me...’

After hesitating for a few moments, the Swordsman finally snapped awake and ran to pull his sword out of the ground. He and the other hunters looked at Sungjin with suspicion.

‘How did he get so strong?’

Surprise

‘What kind of a man is he?’

Both suspicion and respect were reflected in their eyes. Sungjin spoke to them once more.

“I will repeat myself. I am a spe... No, well I am a weird existence... Even if it doesn’t make sense, please understand. If you just listen to my advice and hunt normal mobs, then nothing bad will happen. I am going to...”

Sungjin stopped speaking and asked them a question that had just occurred to him.

“Anyone know about Hidden bosses here?”

During his first run, this raid was the first time Sungjin actually ran across a Hidden boss. By this stage, few of the Hunters should have at least heard rumors of it.

“Do you not know?”

The ‘Iron Wall’ twitched in response. Sungjin looked at him. The hunter’s expression showed Sungjin that he knew about hidden bosses.

“Which one did you find? Hidden Merchant? Gravekeeper? Or Cyclops?”

He twitched again when Cyclops was mentioned.

“How did you...”

‘One out of four...’

Sungjin reiterated himself.

“I will only kill the boss and the hidden boss and disappear. Just know that.”

Finally

[Raid will begin in 10 seconds. 9, 8]

The countdown began, and Sungjin took Soldamyr's lamp out of his pocket. He then rubbed the surface.

“Have you called for me, Master?”

The Blue Giant Soldamyr appeared. Sungjin commanded

“Soldamyr, as we discussed.”

Soldamyr began changing before Sungjin was even done giving the command.

“Walk the dark no matter the light, Shadow Walk!”

And Sungjin disappeared from sight.

“Walk the dark no matter the light, Shadow Walk!”

Soldamyr also hid himself. As soon as he was done,

[Raid commencing!]

The Raid began. Sungjin told Soldamyr

“Let's go.”

“Yes, Master”

The Dark Elven City was a perfect place to use ‘Shadow Walk’ since if not for the raid, the entire city would have been in perfect darkness without the floating lamps.

The silvery white colored magical sources of lights were acting as lamps, but they were easy enough to dodge and stay within the shadow. That did not mean that Sungjin could afford to put down his guard.

Guards patrolled the city wearing heavy armor armed with swords and spears. Even those looking like civilians wore daggers or short swords at their waists.

Killing one or two civilians were no big deal, but if they ran to get help from the guards, it would lead to a drawn out fight.

Even for Sungjin killing the boss, killing the hidden boss, and finding the hidden piece within the 30 minute time limit was no easy feat.

Sungjin stealthily moved without noise, hiding from the lamps and keeping to the shadows. He would sometimes do a countdown

‘5, 4, 3, 2, 1’

In his mind as he ran across a lit area into another shade. Doing this repeatedly helped Sungjin get used to it making it easier. Sungjin peeked into the center of the city where the temple was located.

Inside the temple, the 'Priestess' Kerenis awaited. Sungjin ran across the lit area towards the shade.

'5, 4, 3, 2...'

He reached the building. But

"Intruder!"

The guard's voice could be heard. Sungjin was surprised.

'What?'

The guards passed right by him and headed down into the city, where Sungjin came from. Besgoro, who Sungjin had forgotten about, spoke up.

'They must be talking about the other hunters.'

Besgoro was most likely right. This was even better for Sungjin since he wouldn't have to hide from the guards. Sungjin became emboldened.

“Swift Paw.”

He whispered, taking out the hidden claws. Then

‘5’

He began counting, running up the side of the structure.’

‘4, 3, 2, 1’

And before 5 seconds were over, he hid behind the structure into the shadow. He waited for a second before once again

‘5, 4, 3, 2, 1’ he ran with incredible speed. He repeated this two more times.

Sungjin ran across the Dark Elven City while running on the roof top. And in no time at all, he arrived at the temple where Priestess Kerenis was located. Only 3 minutes passed since the start of the Raid.

The old Knight Besgoro said indifferently.

‘I guess you’ll set a new record today.’

Chapter 070 – Dark Elven City (3)

Sungjin entered inside the Temple while still hidden within the shadow. He could hear an eerie prayer from within.

“Kaima O’ Great God...”

Listening to the prayer gave a strange feeling. He recalled, past the dark and narrow passage and inside the Temple building, five Dark Elves would be standing. At the center directly under a bright source of light

“Your children are preparing for war,”

The Priestess would be found in the middle of a ceremony with four Dark elves kneeling, facing the Priestess from all four directions of the compass.

And as he expected, the Priestess was praying for a blessing.

“Give us your blessing”

As soon as her prayer finished

‘Sssss’

A giant anaconda appeared from nowhere and slithered around the perimeter of the temple. The Priestess pulled out a sharp

dagger and recited an incantation.

“Mabe Laodi Kasber”

Once she gives her command, the giant serpent will throw itself against the Priestess’s dagger. Sungjin had seen this scene once before; the scene of the priestess blessing the other four Elves with the blood of the anaconda.

It goes without saying that Sungjin had no intention of watching it happen again. Sungjin whispered under his breath while hidden in the shadow.

“Soldamyr, do not join the fight. It’s a waste of mana.”

Soldamyr whispered back.

“Yes, Master.”

Sungjin returned his attention to the center of the Temple. An orb of light floated above the Priestess. He would not be able to approach her without losing the effects of Shadow Walk.

‘Will I be able to reach her in just 5 seconds...? I should have saved Swift Paw for now.’

Sungjin took a deep breath. Meanwhile, the Priestess Kerenis had already beheaded the Anaconda and was in the process of pouring

the blood into the chalice. A disgusting act to behold.

But the more concentrated she was, the easier it would be to pull off the assassination. From the darkness,

‘5’

Sungjin began an internal countdown as he charged towards her.

‘4’

He reached the steps at the edge of the altar

‘3’

He jumped off from the top of the stairs

‘2’

Soaring through the air

‘1’

He held Blood Vengeance and Moon Specter in each hand, intending to cut her down on his descent

‘o’

But one of the male Elves kneeling before her stood up to block Sungjin’s attack with his shield.

“Clang~!”

The sound of metal colliding with metal rang through the hall. The Operator gave an announcement.

[Warning! Boss]

[‘Priestess Kerenis’ has appeared!]

Sungjin bit his lips.

‘Tsk... I wanted to try and kill the boss before the Operator can even announce it...’

He had definitely made it within 5 seconds, but they must have automatically responded to the sound of his running. The attention of the five elves was now directed towards him, and each of the Dark Elves picked up their respective weapons to fight him.

“Intruder!”

“Defend the Priestess!”

The male Dark Elf who had blocked the attack with the shield took out his axe from his side; a traditional Tanker.

To his left stood a Swordsman with jealousy in his eyes.

To the right was a skinny dark elf with a spear, and to the far side was a bow-wielding female dark elf Archer.

At their center stood the Priestess wielding a dagger and a chalice, both still dripping the blood of the anaconda. 5 VS 1.

If he had come with the other hunters, it would have been a mirror match. But Sungjin chose the path of a lone wolf; fighting one versus many was a foregone conclusion.

‘But even so, 5v1 is too disadvantageous.’

Sungjin threw the Wolf figurine to his side.

“Ahoo~”

Cain appeared next to him and took a stance. It was now 5v2. But the ‘Priestess Kerenis’ wasn’t just standing idle.

“Awaken and become my slave!”

A spell Sungjin was all too aware of.

“Rise of the Dead!”

The corpse of the Anaconda came back to life due to her spell. 6V2, but numbers weren't everything.

‘Pew’

The female Archer's first shot announced the start of the fight. Sungjin parried the arrow and charged towards the enemies.

The Tank once again stood in his way to block him.

‘If you think you can stop me, it's your mistake!’

Sungjin exchanged two blows with the Tank.

“Cling Clang!”

The Tank had just barely deflected both Blood Vengeance and Moon Specter using his shield and axe. but

“Clang! CLANG!”

With two additional attacks from Sungjin, his eyes grew wide. He must have realized that he couldn't handle Sungjin on his own.

“Rugos, Maran!”

He took a few steps back as he called the names of his allies. The Swordsman and Spearman ran forward to cross swords with Sungjin.

They stood on either side of Sungjin and launched their attacks.

“Clang!”

Sungjin dodged the spear by ducking out of the way and deflected the sword with Blood Vengeance and then counter attacked by spinning around and launching a back kick into the Swordsman’s undefended stomach.

“Pow”

“Ack!”

Kicked in his diaphragm, the Swordsman backed off holding his stomach. Sungjin used Besgoro to make sure he couldn’t interfere by chanting a spell.

“Discard your fangs and become a tame sheep! Polymorph!”

The Swordsman was hit by substitute casting and turned into a sheep.

“You!”

The Tank ran forward to attack with his axe, but Sungjin was able to utilize Kamram to multitask and block even his blows. His dexterity allowed him to fight in a 3v1.

“Shh~”

The giant Anaconda came to attack Sungjin but

“Woof!”

Cain jumped in and bit the snake in the neck.

‘Thanks’

Sungjin thought to himself, as he continued to exchange blows with the Tank. The Tank was pushed back until he was only a few steps away from the Priestess.

Once their master was in harm’s way, the Spearman and the Archer fought even more fiercely.

“Haa!”

The Spearman stabbed away as he spun his spear around nimbly.

‘Pew~’

The female Archer somehow found a way to weave her shots between the movement of her allies to threaten Sungjin. Sungjin still managed to avoid being hit by the axe, spear, and arrow as he dodged everything.

These four guardians were stronger than normal mobs but weaker than the actual bosses. Compared to the hidden boss of the previous round, the manticore, they might as well be fighting in slow-mo.

As strikes continued to land, the enemies were starting to become bloodied. But the problem was the boss. As her guardians defended her, Kerenis recited an incantation.

“Aching bones and loosened muscles”

It was one of the most famous spells, ‘Slow’. Sungjin prepared mentally for the spell.

‘I will undo the spell with Free Ark as soon as it lands.’

“Slow”

But the target was not himself, but Cain who was fighting the Anaconda to the side. The anaconda immediately wrapped itself

around the slowed Cain.

‘Damn it!’

Sungjin used his right hand to deflect both the Tank and the Spearman at the same time as he pointed the Blood Vengeance towards Cain with his left hand.

“Pa!”

The sword was fired towards the Anaconda and landed exactly on its body.

While his left hand was free, Sungjin quickly pulled out ‘Manyata – Master’s Bell’ and rang it

‘Ding~ Ding~’

A short sound rang out. Cain sped up suddenly and escaped the Anaconda’s bind and charged towards the Priestess. The Priestess tried to stop Cain using her dagger, but Cain was currently invulnerable to damage.

Cain ignored the dagger and bit deep into the Priestess’s shoulder.

“Priestess!”

The Archer and the Spearman immediately turned their attention towards Cain. Meanwhile

“Ha!”

Sungjin recovered his sword. He was finally doing a one on one with the Tank. Sungjin began by swinging the Blood Vengeance

“Clang!”

He tied up the enemy's axe, and he pretended to attack the Tank's shield before

‘Woosh’

Changing directions and striking the axe out of his hand.

‘Clack!’

The axe flew far off into the distance. Panicking, the Tank tried to move his shield back and forth to try and keep up with Sungjin's dual blades, but stopping Sungjin's attack with only one shield was impossible.

The Tank saw the blades attack from two directions simultaneously, one from above and one from below, and couldn't respond in time; He couldn't block either of them.

“Ahh!”

He had worn a full plate, but Sungjin’s two sharp blades cut through the armor and skin alike. The Tank was defeated, giving a moment of respite for Sungjin to survey the situation.

The Archer and the Spearman were prying Cain off of the Priestess. Cain spun around and returned to Sungjin’s side. He spat something out; still bleeding chunk of Dark Elven skin.

The priestess glared at Sungjin and Cain in turn and suddenly threw the Chalice forward. The chalice flew at an incredibly slow rate in comparison to the Archer’s bow, not to mention it was flying in the wrong direction.

The Chalice fell before Sungjin’s feet. But

‘What’s this?’

Sungjin had watched it fly towards him without much thought, but the blood contained within the chalice suddenly evaporated and turned into vapor. Sungjin breathed in the vapor and sensed something wrong.

‘This is dangerous’

Sungjin jumped back. It must have contained the [anaconda’s toxin](#). Cain also jumped back, but he was staggering.

Tl note: real anacondas don't have toxin, but this is fantasy so please allow the author to exercise creative freedom.

“Whine...”

Wolves had a far superior sense of smell, and so the effects must have been much faster to manifest in Cain. While Cain and Sungjin were getting out of the way of the Vapor, the Priestess shouted an incantation.

“Close the wounds and erase the pain, Heal!”

The Tank who was moaning on the floor stood up. He picked up his shield as if nothing had happened. The Spearman picked up the axe and tossed it back to him.

The Tank stood like a wall between Sungjin and the others. The Swordsman returned to normal and took his spot to the Tank's left. The Archer was already nocking another arrow. Sungjin frowned.

‘This might take a while...’

Sungjin looked towards his right hand to the ‘Moon Specter’

‘I wanted to save this for the Hidden Boss...’

The hidden boss of this raid was extremely powerful. But if he

were to try and save ‘Ghastly Wail’ now, the fight might drag on longer than its 10 minute cooldown. Sungjin made up his mind and sheathed his sword.

‘Pew~’

The Archer launched a shot. Sungjin deflected the shot with the Blood Vengeance on his left hand.

Keeping his hands over the handle of the Moon Specter, he dashed towards the group of Dark Elves. The Tank, Swordsman, and Spearman all charged at him simultaneously, but this was what Sungjin was aiming for.

“Ghastly. Wail.”

Sungjin said as he pulled out the Moon Specter.

“Kyaa!”

The unearthly screech reverberated in the air, and the Swordsman and Spearman immediately fled.

At least the Tank still stood his ground, but he was shaken by fear and unable to move normally.

Sungjin ran past him and headed towards the Priestess. If anyone in the enemy party could cast heal, taking them out was always the

first priority.

‘Pew’

The Archer in the back had received the least of the Ghastly Wail’s effects and tried to keep Sungjin away, but it couldn’t buy much time. The Priestess stuttered as she tried to chant

“B...Broken Mirror and d...dead crows...”

She tried to recite an incantation for a curse, but Sungjin reached her and with the first strike

‘Clang’

Knocked the dagger out of her hands

‘Woosh’

And removed her head with the second strike.

‘Splat’

[Boss ‘Priestess Kerenis’ Cleared]

The Operator gave an announcement. Besgoro whispered.

‘It took longer than 1 minute, Kei.’

Sungjin dug his ears as he responded.

“Yeah, yeah I know.”

Chapter 071 – Dark Elven City (4)

“How dare he... to the Priestess!”

The four dark elves upon regaining their senses rushed towards Sungjin, but without the Priestess’s magic, they weren’t much more than regular monsters.

Sungjin’s swordplay and Cain’s teeth took them down one at a time. Sungjin, who had turned all of the Dark Elves into corpses, began to calculate in his head.

‘Ghastly Wail’s cooldown is 10 minutes... so at this point... I need to first find the hidden piece, then... find ‘that guy’... It should take about 10 minutes.’

He spoke to the Operator immediately after organizing his thoughts.

“Operator, I’m going to use Treasure Hunter’s effect. Let me know if there’s a hidden piece here.”

Soon, the Operator’s voice spilled out from the cube

[An oracle that reads the past and sees the future]

[All who meet him cannot cease their awe at his mystique]

[People gathered like clouds; drawn to him by the rumors]

[But he has never read the stars, only people]

[People's hearts are ultimately their fates]

[It is but an easy task to foretell destiny if you can read the heart]

Sungjin lightly scratched his forehead. He didn't care to listen to it twice. He chose to seek help from Besgoro.

"Besgoro? Did you hear it?"

'I heard it.'

"Can you make any sense of it?"

'No, but... considering it is referring to an oracle... we should go visit a fortune teller, shouldn't we?'

It was an advice that anyone could give, but it also didn't look as though struggling about it here would get them to an answer any faster.

"Let's just get out of here first."

Sungjin left the temple with Besgoro on his head and his two summons: Soldamyr and Cain. The city extended out like a cone with this temple at the center. It was possible to look out across the entire city with one sweep from here.

“A fortune teller... A fortune teller...”

Sungjin muttered to himself as he looked around the city when Soldamyr spoke from his side.

“Master, over there.”

“Hm? Where?”

At Sungjin’s inquiry, Soldamyr pointed towards a direction. Halfway down the cone stood a cylindrical building with a domed roof.

“If you carefully examine that dome... you can see something like a design on it.”

Sungjin carefully examined, as he was asked, for a few seconds. A half-open sleepy eye could be seen when the magic light, that floated above the entire city, moved above the dome. The image appeared to be drawn in a type of illuminating material that sparkled brightly when viewed under the light. Soldamyr spoke again at his side.

“That half-open eye is the eye that looks into truth. An eye made of mirrors. It represents Jeremiah, one of the two Great Magicians.”

Based on Soldamyr's familiarity with it, the pattern seemed to have some magical significance.

"So?"

"In reality... it is not a typical symbol for an oracle, but... if they were related... that place looks highly likely."

Still, Sungjin regarded it seriously.

"Let's look around once again. If we step down from here, it won't be as easy to find another place."

"Yes, Master."

Sungjin walked around the entirety of the temple once more with Soldamyr while scanning across the city.

"Master."

"Yes, did you see something?"

"Over there..."

This time, Soldamyr pointed towards the end of the city; an area guarded by soldiers. There was an area veiled by a dark cloth towards the inside of a cave. Sungjin spoke full of confidence.

“Ah~ That place isn’t it.”

“What? That looks suspicious no matter what...”

Sunjin spoke, facing him again

“That place has the hidden boss, so look somewhere else.”

Sungjin knew very well what that place was. It was where he first met a ‘hidden boss’. In his previous life, Sungjin and his party had gone to explore the caves right after defeating the raid boss.

“Is that so?”

“Yes, so is there anywhere else other than the cave?”

“Well, other than those two places... nothing else seems to stand out. It could be because we’re at the peak... how about over there?”

The third place Soldamyr pointed was the entrance area that Sungjin passed over. It was the direction Sungjin had come from, where the area was not illuminated by the pale glow of magical orbs of light but a red glow from real burning flames.

“Ah, not over there. It looks like other hunters are hunting over there.”

“Ah, you’re right.”

Listening carefully, one could hear a battlecry.

‘It sounds like things are going well.’

Sungjin looked over the city one final time with those thoughts in mind. No matter how hard he searched, no other location stood out.

“Let’s head over to the location with the sleepy-eyed pattern.”

“Yes, master.”

“Magic once more...”

Sungjin asked Soldamyr to cast his spell once again. However, Cain and his wide eyes staring back at him came into view.

“Soldamyr, can you hide Cain as well?”

“Yes. I have enough mana, but...”

“But?”

“There is about 6 to 7 minutes until the summoning expires.”

The Summoning duration is 15 minutes, and he had been summoned since the start of the raid, so the numbers added up.

“Ok. Just get me over there... I’ll do the rest.”

Sungjin turned and spoke to Cain.

“Cain, you can follow along by our scent, right?”

“Woof!”

“Walk the dark no matter the light, Shadow Walk.”

Sungjin, Cain, and Soldamyr became hidden through the spell. Before stepping down from the temple, Sungjin took a peek over at the area covered with the black cloth. He gauged the distance to it from the dome with the image of a half closed sleepy eye.

‘It should be okay to sprint that distance once I find the hidden piece’

Sungjin came down from the temple moving from shadow to shadow. On the way were lightly armed and armored civilians and patrols with medium armor and armaments, but Sungjin did not

provoke them. With only 10 minutes having elapsed, this was the fastest cleared raid on record and bypassing normal mobs was a big part of it. There was a clear benefit to passing by all the regular monsters. Sungjin felt confident that he could clear both hidden elements within 30 minute time limit. A very talented party would be able to take down a boss in thirty minutes. It met up with the duration limit.

‘Well, if there’s any time left. I can hunt some normal mobs.’

Sungjin continued to walk through the darkness with these thoughts. He was soon able to arrive at the sleepy-eyed dome. He could clearly see that the building was unique up close. Contrary to the plain and simple buildings surrounding it, the entire building was engraved with elaborate symbols: sun, moon, stars, and astrological signs. Along with some traditional oracular symbols, animal symbols such as cow, snake, lamb, and other similar animals were present. The ‘Sleepy-eye pattern’ on top of the dome was also engraved in several places. It was definitely looked like the home of a fortune teller at first glance.

‘Looks like I found the right place.’

Sungjin confirmed his thoughts as he looked towards the entrance, but the entrance had an excessive number of dark elves lined up as the hint stated.

‘People gathered like clouds; drawn to him by the rumors’

Despite the sheer number of people gathered, the reason he

didn't notice them earlier was because all of them were completely silent as they stood in the queue.

‘I guess these people never heard of small talk...’

Sungjin thought to himself as he began to roughly count their numbers.

‘One, two, three, four...’

It looked to be around more than 10 people, and among them were some soldiers that were part of the crowd judging by their medium armor and weapons. It would be easy enough to fight them, but if he was discovered here, it seemed like he would have to face countless elves jumping out of the woodworks.

‘If I get into a fight here, It’s going to drag on for a while...’

To the contemplating Sungjin,

“Grr...”

A low growl from Cain could be heard. It was a warning he gives when he spots some normal enemies. Sungjin knelt down and spoke to him in a low voice.

“Cain, can you lead these guys away for a bit? When it gets dangerous after you’re revealed, I’ll release the summon. Ok?”

Cain responded at a volume that matched his master.

“Arf”

He responded quietly.

“Ok. Go on, Cain.”

His figure couldn't be seen, but

‘Dash dash dash’

Sounds could be heard. Cain, who came out of the shadow, appeared in front of the dark elves after a while. It looked as though a large wolf appeared out of nowhere.

“Grrr”

He bared his teeth.

“Kya!!!”

Several dark elven women began screaming in fear.

“Who is this guy?”

Some of the dark elven men drew their blades. Cain rushed forward in front of the people causing several dark elves to run, and others to chase him. Soon, the massive crowd of people that formed in front of the fortune teller's house was gone, and Sungjin carefully entered inside.

The interior of the building was bizarre, resembling the [Temple of the Snake](#). The sinister symbols, stuffed monsters that couldn't be identified, and hypnotizing patterns on the carpet stood out to him, but he didn't have any time to spare admiring the decor. Sungjin walked right inside, and he could hear a voice beyond a thin cloth.

“Is there anything you desire, sir customer?”

Sungjin approached the cloth covering without any thoughts in particular. However, the voice spoke again.

“Hidden piece? There is no such thing here.”

‘How did he know?’

Sungjin drew back the thin cloth covering. There was an androgynous figure adorned glamorously with various jewels and makeup to a degree sitting in front of a crystal ball. While Sungjin was frowning at the gaudy appearance, the oracle was also taken back by Sungjin's presence.

“Human!”

The voice indicated that the figure was male; A male with makeup. The surprised man drew a hidden blade from beneath the table, but the fact that he was a hidden piece and not a hidden boss indicated how weak he was.

‘Swish’

Sungjin’s blade cut through his neck, and he fell where he stood. Sungjin began to look around his surroundings. No matter what, the crystal ball stood out the most.

It was something common enough for all fortune tellers to have a couple of them. Sungjin examined it more carefully, but the Operator’s explanation window didn’t come up. Sungjin threw it roughly towards the ground and looked around once more.

‘Just what could it be...’

At this moment, Besgoro added his thoughts on the matter.

‘Reading one’s mind. Isn’t that it?’

Sungjin looked around and spoke to him.

“What do you mean and where?”

‘Over there. The earring that he is wearing.’

Sungjin looked down. A necklace on his neck, a nose ring on his nose, and he had an earring in each ear with different colors. One was blue, and the other was violet.

“Which side?”

‘No... Look at the light...’

Sungjin held the man’s neck and shook him roughly. Whenever the light hit him just right, the violet earring on the right revealed the sleepy-eye symbol that had been seen before. He felt bad, but there was no time to pull it out gently. Sungjin pulled out a knife and cut off the entire ear. The Operator’s voice could be heard.

[Congratulations. You have found the Hidden Piece]
[Jeremiah’s Eye Acquired.]

Sungjin tried to extract it from the ear, but from the outside...

“Arf Arf”

Cain’s cries could be heard. Sungjin grabbed the dark elf’s ear with the earring and left the fortune teller’s house.

“Get him!”

Voices could be heard. Sungjin hid back into the shadows and said

“Cain release summon”

Soon, Cain’s wooden figurine appeared in his hand.

“Good job, Cain.”

Sungjin gave Cain’s wooden statue a kiss and stuffed it into his pocket

Chapter 072 – Dark Elven City (5)

Sungjin returned to the darkness. Soldamyr didn't have much time left, but he was still curious about the earring he had obtained as a hidden piece.

Taking it out, he held it up and read through the information screen.

Trite – Eye of Jeremiah

Heroic Earring

Passive Skill

Legilimency(I) – Read the surface level thoughts of the person you are conversing with.

Activated by touching the earring. 10 seconds duration once the conversation begins. Cooldown 10 minutes.

Fate is determined by the mind.

Change the mind to alter the fate.

‘Legilimency? Mind reading?’

It was a skill he wanted to have from time to time. But it wasn't necessarily helpful during combat.

‘It might be useful in sniffing out a potential troll but...’

He wasn't quite sure where it would come in handy. He would have to try it out once or twice. Sungjin went ahead and equipped it for now.

“Equip”

“Master, I have 1 minute remaining until summon ends.”

Soldamyr let him know the time.

“Got it”

Sungjin resumed running from shadow to shadow as he made his way through the city towards the city limit; Towards the hidden boss's tent. Once he was exactly on the other side of the raid's starting point in the middle of a residential area, Soldamyr said

“It is time Master.”

“Ok, thanks for your hard work.”

Soldamyr returned to the lamp after time over. The magic was undone, and both Sungjin and Cain reemerged from invisibility. Sungjin did a quick mental calculation.

‘Since I summoned Soldamyr at the same time as the Raid start, it has taken me only 15 minutes for the Raid boss and the hidden

piece... Even if it takes me 10 minutes to kill the Hidden boss... I have plenty of time remaining.'

The most typical timing a for a troll to appear is after the main raid boss is defeated. A talented group of Hunters would take minimum 30 minutes to beat the Raid boss.

'Starting with the next raid... I might be able to make use of one or two additional Marbles on top of what I've got.'

It wasn't over yet, but more than half of his plan was already completed.

'Even if that's the case... I should still see how fast I can finish everything. Since I still have to get a feel for how long troll hunting will take in the other chapters.'

Once Sungjin was done making plans, he snuck his way towards the 'black tent' where the hidden boss was hiding.

He tried to keep to the dark and sneak by the elves without the help of magic. And he successfully passed a few.

It reminded him of playing hide and seek as a child, avoiding the line of sight of the elves, dodging in and out of the shade.

But when he was almost upon the 'black tent' towards the edge of the residential area, his eyes met with that of a patrol.

“Human!”

The patrol yelled immediately.

‘Haa... oh my...’

Infiltration without the help of magic was difficult. And this was his first time trying to be discreet.

Sungjin drew his blades as he watched the elves come charging towards him with swords, daggers, and spears.

Behind him, countless Elven corpses littered the ground. Sungjin grumbled as he put away his swords.

“If you just ignored me, it would have been better for everyone.”

It took additional three minutes to kill the normal Dark Elves. He intentionally didn’t use any magic.

Sungjin felt that using Magic might attract even more mobs, and he didn’t want to make the effort of managing his mana. Although it took more time, foregoing spells had a positive side effect.

The cooldown for ‘Ghastly Wail’ was almost over. Sungjin asked

the Operator.

“Operator, is Ghastly Wail available to use now?”

[Cooldown will be over in 12 seconds.]

It was as good as ready for use. Sungjin glanced at the Black Tent. The Hidden boss awaited.

Initially, there used to be two Elves standing guard at the entrance, but they were gone now.

He didn't remember killing them, but they must have gotten involved in the fight earlier and died.

Sungjin took a deep breath before going in to fight the boss.

Sungjin opened up the black cloth and stepped inside. On the inside of the tent was a small entrance to a cave. Sungjin recalled the memory of the first time he had stepped into the cave.

The last time he was here, he had succeeded in hunting the 'Priestess Kerenis' with the cooperation of four other hunters, and the group left the Temple of the Snake together. The consensus of the group was

“There is still time left, so let’s go hunt the remaining monsters.”

So the hunters left to search for mobs. Then and now, the importance of coins was indisputable. Sungjin at the time had no idea that Hidden bosses existed.

Thanks to the abnormal amount of luck Sungjin had been able to collect higher than average contribution from chapter to chapter. And when someone pointed out the black tent and said

“That black tent looks suspicious. Do you think it’s hiding a hidden boss?”

He was surprised.

“Hidden boss? There are hidden bosses too?”

Someone else replied

“What? You haven’t heard of them yet?”

Of the five hunters, three were aware of the Hidden boss’s existence. And among them, one or two had even fought and won against one. Emboldened by their previous success, one of the hunters had suggested

“Should we go get the hidden boss this round?”

All five hunters were of high skill. They sustained no significant damage against the main boss and exhibited great teamwork.

So they slowly made their way towards the black tent while killing the Dark Elves. And once they killed the final two guards at the entrance, they entered the tent.

Behind the tent was a round cave. Sungjin and his teammates entered within. Soon, the cave led to a place where the light was intense.

At the end of the cave, they saw bright sunlight and green leaves. The tent was actually the exit of the cavern. On suddenly coming out into the sun, their eyes were blinded.

While they were adjusting to the light, they discovered that a single Dark Elf was standing alone to the east. When they hastily prepared for battle, the Dark Elf began a conversation with them.

“... Did you guys come to run away too?”

One of the hunters replied.

“What are you? Are you the Hidden Boss?”

“Hidden boss? I don’t know what that is... but if you wish to challenge me, I will gladly accept.”

The hunters sheepishly glanced at each other. They had massacred countless dark elves until now. Having one Dark Elf ‘accept their challenge’ was amusing.

One of the hunters responded.

“Sure, we challenge you. Except, we will fight as a group of five since that’s how we have always fought.”

The Dark Elf drew two blades from his side and said

“That’s fine. It won’t even be a fight without at least five of you anyway.

At the same time, the Operator gave a warning.

[Warning! Hidden Boss]

[Exiled Dark Elf Calian has appeared.]

And of the five hunters who ‘challenged’ him, two were killed and the other three barely managed to escape back into the cavern.

Sungjin couldn’t help but grin remembering the past.

‘At the time, I didn’t realize that hidden bosses would be so much stronger than regular bosses...’

Once he left the cavern, the sunlight greeted him once more. Thanks to the ‘Ghost Vision’, it didn’t overwhelm him like last time.

Instead of squinting in the sun, Sungjin took out ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’ from his vest and prepared it. The Dark Elf was waiting outside like before.

Once Sungjin approached him, the Elf began the conversation the same as last time.

“... Did you come to run away too?”

Sungjin wanted to read the ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms and land a preemptive strike since the opponent was no pushover. But when he opened the ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’, every page was blank.

Sungjin was shocked.

‘Is it because it’s before a fight?’

The ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’ was a magical book that picked the passage best suited for the situation. It appeared as

though if there was nothing to fight it would show an empty page.

‘But if I don’t use this before the fight it’s difficult to find the timing to do so...’

After using it a few times, Sungjin felt that the time required to read a full passage was a major disadvantage. Being able to read it from start to finish gave him a great advantage, but it was not easy to do so.

In the past, he had watched the owners quickly read the book while the other hunters bought time for them to do so. The same would not be possible for Sungjin who was alone.

‘I should go ask in ‘Darker than Black’... how I can reduce the time necessary to read the book.’

Sungjin closed it for now.

‘I’m not sure if I will be able to manage reading this book during this fight...’

But there was not much else he could do. Having only the desire to read alone was not enough for him to be able to read the book after all.

He closed the book, and instead decided to use magic to launch a preemptive strike.

“Burn everything in your path!”

But

[Warning! Attacking a non-hostile lifeform]
[will result in penalty for raid rewards]

The Operator let out a warning.

Sungjin stopped in the middle of the incantation.

‘What is this?’

The Dark Elf asked

“What are you doing? Are you trying to challenge me?”

It appeared that he must say ‘I challenge you’ in order to turn the Elf into a ‘hostile lifeform’.

‘How strict.’

Sungjin grumbled as he replied.

“Yeah challenge.”

“... Alone?”

Sungjin nodded.

“Yeah.”

“Understood, o warrior. Let us clash blades.”

The Dark Elf pulled out his two blades from his hips. Dual Wield versus Dual Wield. Once his sword was out, the Operator finally gave a warning.

[Warning! Hidden Boss]

[Exiled Dark Elf Calian has appeared.]

The combat had begun. Sungjin once again opened ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’. This time, large fonts had appeared on the page.

“Dong Zhuo attempted to enter the castle, but the Horse refused to move forward. Finding the horse’s behavior strange...”

But there was no time to read anymore, as the Dark Elf came charging towards him.

Sungjin threw aside the book and met his attack by unsheathing his own two swords. Soon

“Cl Clang!”

A deafening sound of clashing steel rang out. The two of them struggled in a contest of strength using the four swords. But neither was able to overpower the other. Besgoro spoke.

‘This guy... he’s really strong’

And as soon as Besgoro was done, the two combatants pushed each other away, momentarily putting some distance between the two before the fight resumed when they both charged against each other.

Sungjin used one hand to strike from top to bottom while using his left hand to strike diagonally up from below. A strike without pattern, an attack that was impossible to pull off without ‘Kamram’; a perfect dual wield style of fighting.

But Calian responded in kind, blocking both attacks as if he himself also wore ‘Kamram’. An extended exchange of blows began in earnest.

Slashing, blocking, counter attacking, parrying, in a span of few

seconds, dozens of strikes were exchanged. Sungjin forcefully pushed the man away. Besgoro commented

‘You guys are neck to neck’

There was a good reason why five hunters lost against him; The ‘Exiled Dark Elf’ Calian was just that strong.

He didn’t want to admit it, but it would be difficult to defeat him with only his swordsmanship. Sungjin returned the Moon Specter to the sheath and said

“Baptism of Blood”

Small blades emerged from Sungjin’s sword and bit into his hands, drawing blood.

Sungjin’s blood drenched the Blood Vengeance, and becoming thrilled at the sight of his opponent’s blade glowing red, Calian shouted excitedly

“Come, Challenger!”

Chapter 073 – Dark Elven City (6)

Sungjin charged towards Calian with only Blood Vengeance while keeping his hand on the Moon Specter. He was planning on using Ghastly Wail to find the opportunity to strike him down using the empowered Blood Vengeance.

But that was no easy feat. Once Sungjin got close

“Woosh woosh”

He swung with both swords nimbly. Sungjin backed off while parrying the strikes with only Blood Vengeance.

From experience, the effect of “Ghastly Wail was stronger the closer he stood to the enemy. But Calian was too strong to use it in close melee.

Sungjin couldn’t help but back further up as he continued to block Calian’s attack with one hand before shouting

“Ghastly Wail”

He quickly activated the ability and drew out the blade.

“Kyaa~”

An earsplitting screech reverberated through the air, and the

ever-confident Calian backed off with a surprised look on his face.

It didn't look like the Ghastly Wail applied full effect upon him, but it was enough. It was a golden opportunity.

'I don't know if I will get any other chance to take him down.'

Sungjin charged at him. But

"Light of Aeon."

Something glowed brightly from under Calian's armor, and he returned to normal.

Sungjin quickly swung his reddened Blood Vengeance, but

'Clang!'

Calian crossed his blade and blocked the blow. Sungjin gritted his teeth and swung his swords twice more

"Clang! Bang!"

Calian didn't counter attack and only blocked the oncoming strikes. He had even less opening then when he was also counter-attacking. Failing his attempt to catch his opponent off guard, Sungjin backed off.

‘What a monster.’

Sungjin swore under his breath and pressed the side of his sword. The Baptism of Blood ended. There was no reason to needlessly drain his HP.

This time Calian charged towards Sungjin. He was slightly stronger than Sungjin in swordsmanship.

The two fighters would occasionally graze against cloth or skin, but no one took significant damage. And during the fight

‘What a ridiculously strong opponent.’

Besgoro said what was on Sungjin’s mind. If Sungjin at least had Cain or Soldamyr, it would have made things easier, but their activation period was already over.

And for some reason, Sungjin wished to win 1 on 1 against him.

“Clang clang click clack!”

The two fighters and their four swords clashed mightily but to no conclusion. Meanwhile

‘...kill’

It was a voice he hasn't heard in a long time; Yanhurat's whisper. Sungjin ignored it as he continued to fight. But for some reason, Besgoro responded to the voice.

‘What’s this sound?’

He must have heard it somehow as well.

‘Kill...’

‘Did it say kill?’

Sungjin was busy fighting for his dear life, and two ghosts were chattering away. Getting distracted, Sungjin used his two swords to push Calian away and made some distance.

“Ah shut up!”

Meanwhile, Calian chanted a spell.

“Lance which pierces all! Lightning Bolt!”

Sungjin tumbled to the side to dodge the spell. Now that he thought of it, This Dark Elven Swordsman knew how to use magic. But Sungjin was the same.

‘Eye for an eye, magic for magic.’

“What is real is fake and what is fake is real!”

He had Besgoro start an incantation first and then used the spell he wanted to try using in conjunction with substitute chanting. As Besgoro began his chant, Sungjin also recited an incantation.

“Burn everything in your path!”

Last time, there was a slight delay between the casting of two spells, but this time Sungjin matched the timing perfectly.

“Illusion!”

Sungjin’s body split into 6.

“Fire Ball!”

Six Fireballs were shot from six Sungjins, all in different directions. Of course only one was real, but it looked as if six were fired at once.

Calian who took on the Ghastly Wail without batting an eye panicked. He didn’t know how to dodge the attack, so he backed as far as he could, using his swords to shield his body.

“Boom!”

Calian was lucky. The farthest fireball was the real deal. But it was still effective. The incendiary secondary effect put his mantle on fire.

It was certainly an effective method, so there was no reason not to try again. Sungjin chanted the spell again.

“Fireball!”

But

“Reflect Magic”

He muttered something, and his right sword glowed bright purple. He watched the six fireballs carefully and reflected only the real one.

‘What?’

The fireball changed directions and came flying towards Sungjin. Sungjin’s eyes grew wide as he rolled over to the side and yelled

“Solidify!”

And shortly after

“Boom!”

The ball of fire exploded. Although Sungjin had surprised him the first time, he already figured out a way to tell the real attack by the next cast.

‘My god... after just once... he was able to tell the real from fake.’

Without watching the fireball explode, or without knowing which one is the real caster, it is an impossible feat.

Sungjin stood up once Solidify was over. He pulled out his swords. After the last counter attack, he made up his mind.

‘This guy is too strong to take it lightly.’

He had forgotten for a long time; The raid was a game where you had to put your life on the line. If he is unable to defeat the enemy in front of him, he will die. Once he prepared himself, he asked Besgoro

“Mr. Besgoro, you said that Frenzy increases attack speed the more I attack?”

‘Specifically 10% for each hit you land.’

Sungjin didn’t listen to him all the way as he took out the

Yanhurat's Necklace from his pocket.

“Equip”

He put it on instead of Basilisk's Eye. Snake Eye would be an interesting ability to try out against Calian, but to make sure the job gets done, this way was better. Once he had Yanhurat's Necklace on

‘Kill! Kill!’

The voice grew faster and faster. Besgoro seemed to be sensitive to its voice.

‘Kill I say... Kill...’

It must have had a stronger effect on him due to his long career on the battlefield. Sungjin answered the two ghosts.

“I will.”

Once he was done making preparations, Sungjin once again

“Baptism of Blood”

Activated Blood Vengeance's active effect and fed it his blood. Sungjin noticed Calian get excited after seeing Blood Vengeance

glow crimson red.

And it was right for Calian to be; sacrificing his own HP to empower his strike was nothing short of telegraphing that a large attack was coming. Calian took precaution.

“Protection of Darkness, return everything to null, Dark Shield!”

Soon his entire body was enveloped by a dark aura. Black magic which raised the defense. Sungjin had seen someone use that in the past.

‘Kill! Kill! Kill!’

‘Let’s go kill him! I want to see that elf’s blood!’

The ghosts were getting out of hand. Sungjin shouted

“Frenzy”

Besgoro’s ‘Frenzy’ mode was activated. And finally

‘Kill kill kill kill!’

He finally accepted Yanhurat’s plea.

“Zealot”

Baptism of Blood, Frenzy, and Zealot. Using all three effects simultaneously, Sungjin charged towards Calian like a banshee.

Calian was caught off guard at Sungjin who began moving three times as fast as before. He had to put everything he had into defense, using both of his swords to protect himself.

‘Clang clang ching clack!’

Calian was a master at swordplay. He was able to keep up with Sungjin who was moving three times the normal. But even he could not block all of Sungjin’s blows.

In the middle of his iron defense, just once

‘Pew~’

Moon Specter grazed against his upper arm. And this was just the beginning. Frenzy kicked in, and Sungjin began to move even faster.

Calian took a few steps back to defend but

‘Woosh’

Blood Vengeance grazed against his calf. He thought to himself

‘Its still okay. I didn’t get hit in the vitals.’

But the danger of ‘Frenzy’ was in these little hits. Each time an attack successfully landed, sungjin’s power and speed would grow, giving up more and more hits. Calian gave up a third hit.

This was the end. The Ghosts who saw blood shouted loudly

‘Kill kill kill KILLLLL!’

‘Finish him off Kei! Cut off his head, and lets see his blood!’

Drowning in the frenzied shouting of two ghosts, Sungjin lost his sanity.

[...Clear]

When Sungjin came to, the combat was already over. He heard the Operator’s warning.

[Warning! Half HP]

‘Hmm?’

Sungjin was surprised and immediately turned off the Baptism of Blood. Now that he thought of it, he didn’t need to keep this one on either.

After two or three hits, bonus damage didn’t matter after all. Keeping Baptism of Blood active in an unconscious state was a dangerous gamble.

‘I’m just lucky that there are no enemies around...’

Sungjin turned around. Calian’s corpse was cut apart to pieces until it was no longer recognizable as a body. Sungjin held up his blade to respect him.

‘An amazing adversary. If it wasn’t for my items... I couldn’t have hoped to defeat him.’

After thinking so, Sungjin held Yanhurat.

“Unequip”

And returned it to the cube. Besgoro was still frenzied.

‘Kill them all! Kill them!’

“Unequip!”

Sungjin took off Besgoro for now and held it on his side. Sungjin sat down for now and took a breather.

“Whew...”

He was a powerful enemy. Most hidden bosses were difficult to defeat with the cooperation of five hunters, but this ‘Calian’ was strong even among them.

It was the first enemy in a while that could reawaken a sense of peril in Sungjin.

‘Now that I think of it... once I began buying stuff in Darker than Black... I stopped investing in myself.’

As the chapters progress, enemies continuously grow stronger. And the further the chapter goes, the bigger the difference between each successive chapters. If he couldn’t keep up with the pace, he would perish.

Once Sungjin obtained ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’, he felt that he relied on the item too much. Sungjin turned around. The book was laying on the ground nearby.

He had dropped it at the start of the fight due to being charged at

and interrupted. Sungjin walked up to the book and dusted it off.

He thought to himself.

‘These ‘book’ items have such glaring weakness...’

It took too long to read out the passages. After all, the item depended on the tank providing the time to read the passages safely without interruption. Its previous owner had done the same.

‘For one reason or another... it’s time I looked for upgrades.’

Sungjin put away the book. He asked the Operator about the time.

“Operator, how much time passed since the Raid’s start?”

[24 minutes 32 seconds have passed.]

“Ok...”

He still had some time. And he had lost a great deal of HP and MP. Sungjin re-entered the cavern.

He planned to kill a few more enemies to replenish HP and MP.

There wouldn't be any troll as strong as Calian, but there was always a possibility that he would get outnumbered.

Before going back in, he reequipped 'Basilisk's Eye' and 'Besgoro'. The moment Besgoro returned to Sungjin's head, he shouted out in glee.

'Hey, Kei, why didn't you use that item earlier? That combined with my Frenzy would make you unstoppable!'

Sungjin thought to himself rather than reply

'Sigh... such a good item... but why does it have such a weird passive?'

Chapter 074 – Dark Elven City (7)

Sungjin was back in the cavern. He had half HP and MP. He wished to replenish them using his Vampire's Ring and Moon Specter respectively.

He had spent 25 minutes on killing both bosses. He had enough time. In fact, because he had lots of time remaining, he decided to take it slow and think for a moment.

‘When I teleport... where would trolls most likely be standing?’

In about 5 minutes, the fastest Hunters would be finishing up the boss. Once that's done, the Trolls would officially begin to appear. 1 hour remained on the clock, giving each teleport roughly 20 minutes of activity time. He would be on a tight schedule.

From realm to realm, he would need to find the trolls. The combat itself wouldn't take as long as the search for the trolls.

And if he took into consideration of searching for those willing to grant him ‘White coins’ or comrades worthy of ‘Holy water of Baptism’, he really didn't have much time to waste at all.

So he had to lower the time spent searching for trolls as much as possible. Sungjin pointed at a corpse of an Elf he had slain earlier and said

“Lich's Beckon”

He replenished his mana as he took a look around the city. The best place would probably be at the temple where the raid boss was.

It was located at the center of the city, at the highest point. He would be able to see where the hunters were fighting in one glance.

Sungjin held his blades out as he began to climb the city. The Elves blocked his way back up, but they were no match for him.

Perhaps due to having concluded a fight to the death with a true blademaster, killing the other dark elves felt like he was challenging little kids to arm wrestling.

‘Whoosh’

Each time Sungjin’s swords danced, dark elven heads rolled onto the floor. As he was hunting, Sungjin asked the Operator,

“Operator, HP”

He kept on checking the HP as he slaughtered the Elves. Meanwhile, Sungjin ran across the hunter groups.

“Eh? You!”

“Adjudicator...”

It was the other four hunters he had come to the raids with. They were shocked to see him as if they had seen a ghost. It was no wonder; unlike other raids, the Cube would have randomly said

[Raid Boss Appeared]

[Boss Cleared]

[Hidden Boss Appeared]

[Hidden Boss Cleared]

Sungjin said to them

“Ah... As promised I only killed the bosses. Feel free to kill everything else around.”

The hunters fell silent at his words.

‘How are you able to do this?’

No one dared to ask. Sungjin’s words and actions were already ‘of another world’.

Especially the ‘High Level Swordsman’ was nervous thinking Sungjin might do something in retaliation for picking a fight earlier and was avoiding eye contact.

Sungjin saw his behavior and couldn't help but grin as he walked by. There were not many enemies left on his way back up to the temple.

The four hunters must have cleared them out diligently. Nonetheless, Sungjin continued to hunt the occasional elves on his way up to the temple.

[HP Full]

The Operator said as Sungjin swung his swords, shaking off the blood on them.

“Time since raid start?”

[30 minutes 12 seconds]

It was time to move on. Sungjin resheathed his swords and took out one of three ‘Trollseeker Marble’ from his vest.

Sungjin entered back into the temple since he wouldn't be able to take full advantage of the marble if he gets delayed by normal mobs.

One he was sure no Dark Elves were nearby, he lifted up the

marble and said

“Pursuit of Justice!”

Despite being deep underground, a pillar of light came down from above and surrounded Sungjin.

[Dimensional transfer has been requested.]

[Before Dimensional transfer can be completed, Raid Reward Distribution must take place.]

[Beginning distribution of rewards.]

The Operator rapidly gave out the rewards.

[Monsters Slain. Dark Elf Civilian: 44. Dark Elven Guard: 25. Dark Elven Mage: 8. Total 728 points.]

[Boss Monster Slain: ‘Priestess’ Kerenis: 1100 points.]

[Hidden Boss: ‘Exiled Dark Elf’: 1100 points.]

[Final Point count: 9480. Distributing points.]

[Your contribution is 65.5%. 6209 Stat points, 6209 Black Coins awarded. Raid Clear Bonus 2800 Stat points and 2800 Black Coins awarded. Item effect ‘Additional 10% gained’ activated. Distributing 9009 Stat points and 9910 Black Coins.]

[And now we will distribute the items.]

Sungjin unconsciously swallowed. This part always made him nervous.

[Artemio – Mage Bane]

[Darke – Cursed Chalice]

[Mamaya – Finger of Brainwashing]

[Enhancement stone]

[Spellbook – Slow]

[Spellbook – Dark Shield]

[Recovery Potion – Large X2]

The Operator gave two rounds of congratulatory messages.

[Congratulations! You have obtained the Legendary Item ‘Artemio’!]

[Congratulations! You have obtained the Legendary Crafting material ‘Enhancement Stone’!]

Several items fell before Sungjin. Sungjin picked them up as he put them away. The one he had his eyes on was the Elegantly curved Legendary sword ‘Artemio’

‘This is definitely...’

It was Calian's magic sword which he used to deflect Sungjin's fireball. Sungjin wanted to pick it up to see the information screen, but the cube was preoccupied with giving announcements.

[Last but not the least, you will be awarded titles you've earned on this raid.]

[Assassin – Attacking unsuspecting enemies increases damage by 100%]

‘Assassin... I think someone had this title recently...’

Now that he thought of it, it was the rapist from back in Giant's Canyon. Thanks to him, Sungjin felt a little bit of reluctance from using this title, but the effects were great. Whether it was the raid boss or trolls, if he could successfully land a sneak attack the title would come handy.

‘Equipping the title doubles sneak attack damage, not equipping it retains 1.5 times the damage... that means if I see a chance for ambush I should take it...’

As Sungjin was thinking, he recalled the existence of ‘Star of the Nameless’. It was such a good item, as it allowed adjusting title according to the situation.

The fight against Calian might have been more difficult due to

having to equip 'Adjudicator' over 'Master Hunter'. The 20,000 price tag was probably well worth it.

'I don't know how much the items I got this time are worth... but I'll keep them in the basket for now.'

[Distribution has ended. Request for Dimensional transfer has been granted.]

[You will be teleported in 10 seconds. 10, 9]

The Operator began her countdown, and Sungjin mentally prepared himself. No mercy for the wicked. He who trolled once will inevitably troll again.

He had to eliminate them thoroughly from the raids as early as possible and prevent them from being able to reach late game. And on the side use Adjudicator passive to earn additional black Coins. For Sungjin it was like killing two birds with one stone.

[5, 4, 3]

As the countdown was finishing up, Sungjin stretched and hopped like a short distance sprinter. He wanted to reduce the time spent searching for the trolls as much as possible.

In other dimensions, tens of thousands of teams of hunters were still making their way through the Raids. Even if only one out of ten thousand dimensions contained trolls, there would be dozens of trolls to catch.

Being able to use ‘Trollseeker marble’ as often as possible was for the best. If he is able to use all three marbles effectively, he could consider getting even more of them.

[2, 1, 0]

The countdown finished, and Sungjin was teleported somewhere else.

All five Hunters were strong and talented. They cooperated perfectly with each other and reached the Temple where the Raid boss awaited them. Once they reached the inside of the temple

“Kaima O’ Great God, your children are preparing for war, give us your blessing.”

They witnessed the Priestess and her four guardians carrying out a strange ritual. They glanced at each other and whispered among themselves.

“It looks like we should be able to launch a surprise attack while

they're distracted.”

“Yeah, let's start off the fight by picking off the archer and the Priestess.”

“Yeah remove the damage dealer first. That's not a bad idea.”

They had planned to ambush the boss. But,

“Sssss”

A giant Anaconda killed itself against the Priestess's dagger, and the 'Elite Sniper' who was watching couldn't help but

‘Gasp!’

Make a strange noise.

“Who goes there disturbing our holy ceremony?”

The priestess's voice rang out, and the battle began without successfully carrying out the ambush. The ambush failed, but the battle went favorably.

The hunters were powerful enough to reach the raid boss within 30 minutes. The problem began when she started using strange brainwashing magic.

When she extracted a rotting finger from her robes and pointed at someone, it led them to turn against their teammates.

They lost an ally and gained an enemy. And of all the targets, the one affected was the 'Slaughterer', a strong damage dealer.

While the hunters were in disarray due to being unsure how to respond

“Ahh!”

A casualty occurred at his hands. The other three worked their hardest to take down the source of the brainwash, but during the process

“Oof”

A second casualty occurred right at the end. The two survivors and the 'Slaughterer' who finally became free of the Brainwashing took down the Raidboss and

[Priestess Kerenis Cleared!]

[Returning to the Black Market in 58 minutes and 23 seconds.]

They managed to clear the raid. But the hunters weren't happy.

Of the two survivors, the 'Destroyer' wielding a giant hammer addressed the 'Slaughterer'.

"This is all your fault."

"Why is that?"

"Why? You got brainwashed like a retard and killed the tank, you know that right?"

"What? How was that my fault? That was the Boss's skill! If you had been hit by that, then you would have been in my position! Do you think you would have been able to stop yourself if you were under the effects of it?"

"I wouldn't have been hit in the first place."

"Stop spouting bullshit. If you want to blame someone, blame that Sniper for ruining our ambush earlier. I fought hard. I couldn't do anything about the Brainwashing."

The 'Elite Sniper' who was listening on the side also joined the argument.

"What are you talking about? What difference do you think that really made? We would have fought the same way in either case. And you would have been brainwashed no matter what. Killing your allies with your hands."

“I didn’t kill them because I wanted to kill them!”

The three of them continued to shout and argue, and in the end, the ‘Destroyer’ couldn’t hold back his anger and finally swung his hammer.

Chapter 075 – Dark Elven City (8)

‘Destroyer’ swung his hammer.

“What...”

Striking the ‘Slaughterer’ who was flung far away by the impact. The ‘Destroyer’ ran in to finish him off, lifting his hammer high in the air, yelling

“Shatter Earth”

But before he could land a shot on the ‘Slaughterer’

“Blink”

The ‘Slaughter’ used magic to get out of the way.

“Boom!”

The entire Temple shook violently. At the same time, the ‘Destroyer’s’ body became enveloped in a red aura, and the Operator gave an announcement.

[Attacked an allied Hunter. Entering ‘Troll’ state]

There were more announcements about raid reward, but the enraged 'Destroyer' ignored the rest of it, searching for the 'Slaughterer' with bloodshot eyes.

'Pew~'

The 'Elite Sniper's' arrow revealed the Slaughterer's position. He was at the stairs of the Temple. 2 to 1 situation. The 'Slaughterer' escaped the temple with the other two in pursuit.

A minute after the three hunters left the area, a white pillar appeared within the temple and a man walked out.

Sungjin took a look around. Inside was the Priestess and her four guardians' corpses. As well as corpses of two unfamiliar hunters.

'Where is he? The troll?'

Sungjin walked out of the Temple and took a look around. The temple was located on the highest point in the city. He could see everything from up here.

In the distance, the Hunters were halfway between the starting point and the temple. He didn't know why they were fighting there, but Sungjin immediately used

“Swift Paw”

And ran towards them using the hidden claws. 10 seconds later, he saw ‘Slaughterer’ fight against the ‘Destroyer’ and ‘Elite Sniper’ both of which had the red aura. Besgoro commented

‘It’s two.’

Four items. Sungjin was happy just thinking about it. He nodded.

“It’s two.”

But it was then that the ‘Slaughterer’ suddenly turned the tables.

“Root them to the ground! Entangle!”

He used magic to hold the ‘Destroyer’ in place

“Blink”

And used teleport to charge towards the Sniper. Before Sungjin could do anything, his axe split the head of the archer.

‘Now just one.’

Despite fighting in a 2v1, he had been able to take one down. He was just that strong.

“You!”

Once the Destroyer got out of the magical roots, they engaged in melee combat. Without intervention, Sungjin could lose both of them.

‘I won’t let that happen.’

Sungjin moved quickly. The other troll was preoccupied with the ‘Slaughterer’ to notice Sungjin approach him.

When the Destroyer lifted up his hammer, Sungjin cut off his hands from behind.

“Ahhh!”

The ‘Destroyer’ was disarmed by Sungjin from behind in an ambush though he wouldn’t have been able to put up a fight up from up front.

Sungjin followed up by beheading him right away.

“Ack!”

With a short cry of pain, the Destroyer kneeled over. The Slaughterer stared at Sungjin in surprise. It must be difficult to imagine a ‘Hunter from the outside’. Sungjin stared at him.

‘He probably wouldn’t kiss the ring even if I ask... right?’

He didn’t feel that the man would agree. He was strong. He would have easily won this 1 v 1. There was no real reason to accept Sungjin’s request of 10% permanent penalty to the raid rewards.

After staring at Sungjin for a moment with wide opened eyes, he finally asked

“Who are you? An enemy?”

Sungjin answered with pursed lips.

“Try me, if you think so.”

The Slaughterer didn’t know what to do. Sungjin just walked over to pick up the items from the ground and put them into the Cube. Sungjin said to him

“Feel free to spend the remaining time however you like. Don’t try to fight recklessly alone.”

Sungjin left it at that and walked back up the hill to the Temple. Picking the temple as the teleport location was a good idea.

All the hunters would have to pass by it at some point, and it was a great vantage point for the whole city.

Once he was back in the temple, Sungjin took out the second marble. Besgoro said

‘We should act even faster next time since the Trolls could have the tables turned and killed before we get to them’

“You’re right.”

Sungjin nodded. If he had acted right away, he could have taken the second Troll down and obtain two more items this round. Once he was mentally prepared, Sungjin shouted

“Pursuit of Justice”

[Trollseeker Marble can only be used once every 10 minutes.]

[Please try again in 4 minutes 27 seconds.]

“Oh really?”

Sungjin took a look at the marble for a second. There was no mention of a cooldown period. It might be due to the fact that it was a consumable type item. Since the Operator made an announcement, he couldn’t do anything to change it.

‘Well even if it’s 10 minutes, I still have enough time so... it

should be okay.’

Sungjin took a look around. In the distance, he could see the black tent leading to the exit of the cavern.

The place where the ‘Hidden Boss’ was waiting. But even if he killed additional mobs in this realm, he wouldn’t get anything. As the merchant of ‘Darker than Black’ said, there is only one raid reward distribution.

He had time to burn and had nothing to do. So Sungjin took a seat at the stairs and asked the Operator

“Please give me the items I got from the last raid distribution.”

At his request, the Operator gave him three items. An elegantly curved sword, a chalice, and the shriveled up finger. Sungjin picked up the sword first.

‘It was a legendary item if I recall ...’

Artemio – Mage Bane

Legendary Scimitar – Strength S Dexterity A

Passive Skill

Spell Eater (II) – Reduces damage taken from spells by 20%

Active Skill

Reflect Magic (IV) – Reflects offensive type magic spells under 6th Circle back at the caster. Cooldown 10 minutes.

Sword specially designed for Mage Hunters.

‘Oooh...’

Sungjin nodded happily. It was a specialist sword. Active and passive were all anti-magic. This sword would make fights against mages easier.

And the offensive stats were great, befitting that of its legendary status. Sungjin decided to

“Equip”

Test the sword by swinging it in midair. It was slightly different from the Katana style swords he normally wielded, but it should be similar in theory.

‘This is worth using as my third weapon.’

With these stats, it was well worth carrying around. Switching it with Moon Specter or Blood Vengeance when facing mages would make things easier.

Sungjin hung the sword from his left side, behind the Moon

Specter. If he had gotten this in his previous life, he would have put it up for auction ASAP, but he could now afford to have an extra sword around.

The next item was a Chalice. A chalice with a grotesque image of a snake decorating it.

Darke – Cursed Chalice

Heroic Support Weapon

Passive Skill

Empower Black Magic(III) – Increase power of black magic by 30%

Active Skill

Spiritual Link (Maragor) – A snake possessing potent venom and enormous strength. Call upon Maragor.

If Summon is killed, or if 10 minutes pass from the time of summoning, it disappears.

The Chalice of the Priestess Kerenis.

Cursed is more accurate than Blessing.

‘Now that you mention it...’

He remembered someone who used this in the past. One of the final 10, the only woman among men, ‘Nada’. Sungjin reminisced

about her for a moment.

She had a rough demeanor but had perfectly smooth and clear skin, upturned nose, large eyes and bright emerald iris.

‘She was quite a beauty...’

But unlike Serin Han, she managed to survive to the end without having to hide her face.

It was due to her monstrous speed, lethal dagger skills, and extremely powerful black magic.

Among the ‘Final 10’, none of the 9 surviving men ever dared make a move against her.

‘But this is completely useless to me...’

It was the truth. Thanks to Kamram granting Sungjin the ability to dual wield his swords, items he had to hold with an offhand were useless. The Snake he would keep as a summon was also unappealing.

‘It would be a useful support item for any black mage though...’

And Sungjin already had Cain and Soldamyr.

‘I should just sell it off for about 4000 Coins.’

Sungjin put the Chalice into the cube. The last item was a finger which had completely dried up like a mummy’s.

Mamaya – Finger of Brainwashing

Heroic Accessory

Active Skill

Mind Control(II) – Freely command the target for 10 seconds.

Suicide or self harm is impossible on the controlled target.

The user is unable to move for the duration of the ability.
Cooldown 20 minutes.

Dark Elves were masters of advanced hypnotic magic. And through it, it is said that they could take away fear from allies or control the minds of the enemies.

A strange ability on a strange looking item. Sungjin turned the item around this way and that to inspect it.

‘How am I supposed to use this?’

Control the target for 10 seconds, but no self harm is permitted.
Besgoro commented

‘Even if you can’t harm him yourself... couldn’t you run him off the cliff or throw him into the middle of a group of enemies?’

“But I also can’t move meanwhile.”

That’s quite a large penalty.

“It would be easier for me to just step in and kill them myself.”

‘That’s true... but it could be useful to have around.’

Sungjin decided not to sell it for now. He couldn’t really visualize how he could make use of it, but as Besgoro said, he felt that it would come in handy someday.

Once Sungjin was done checking the items, he picked up the marble again. About 4 minutes would have passed by now.

[Request for Dimensional transfer has been granted.]

Perfect timing. Dimensional Transfer was approved

[You will be teleported in 10 seconds. 10, 9, 8]

The countdown began, and Sungjin teleported for the second time.

Of the five hunters, two were killed during the hunt. Of the three remaining, two of them ganged up on the third to divide the contribution points among themselves. And they were successful.

“Whew... good job.”

“You too.”

The hunters exchanged a fist bump clad in a red aura. Before them was a dead spearman. One of them commented

“This guy... monopolized too much of the contribution points.”

The other hunter replied.

“How were we supposed to survive with him alive?”

The hunters tried to justify their action in their minds. But they got another idea.

‘If he dies, I get everything.’

They had betrayed their allies for more points. There was no reason not to betray the last one remaining. Without a word, both of them moved away from each other at the same time.

They looked into each other's eyes and grinned.

“You thinking what I'm thinking?”

“You too?”

“Alright, let's fight to see who gets all the points.”

“Sounds good.”

The men picked up their sword and spears and faced off against each other. And finally they ran in to clash swords.

“Clang!”

Chapter 076 – Dark Elven City (9)

Once he was done transferring into the new realm for the second time this Raid, Sungjin quickly took a look around from the top of the Temple roof. He observed two individuals fighting in the distance.

‘Hey, Kei’

Besgoro spoke first.

“I know, I’m going.”

Sungjin gave a quick reply and made haste towards the hunters. He didn’t know who was the troll yet, but he was going to protect the victim and eliminate the troll.

But now that he got closer, he noticed that both of them were shrouded in red auras. Sungjin didn’t understand what could have caused them to turn against each other, but it would be a great loss if they continued to clash weapons until one died.

‘Hey, stop fighting’

Trying to stop them would probably be a waste of effort. As he ran, Sungjin chanted a spell alongside Besgoro.

“Discard your fangs and become a tame sheep! Polymorph!”

“Discard your fangs and become a tame sheep! Polymorph!”

The same spell was cast simultaneously with two voices. The two trolls turned into sheep at the same time. Disarming his prey, Sungjin pulled out his two swords.

He attacked the sheep closest to him. On being hit, the magic was undone.

“Who the fuck!”

There was no reason to say anything back. Sungjin moved to behead him. But he shouted a familiar activation word.

“Snake Eye”

He wore the same basilisk’s eye necklace that Sungjin wore around his neck. The closed eyelid opened up, and the snake eye stared at Sungjin petrifying him for a moment.

‘Oh?’

Sungjin immediately followed up with

“Free Ark”

And freed himself from the spell, continuing his attack. The troll was shocked when he saw that his basilisk's eye didn't work and tried to put up resistance, but he was no match for Sungjin.

Blood Vengeance pierced his heart.

“Ugh...”

He let out a short cry of agony before collapsing onto the floor. Sungjin turned around. The Spearman had come out of polymorph already and was alternating his glance between Sungjin and the troll.

He probably didn't know what to do with the sudden appearance of an enemy.

‘If both of them were able to work together they might have stood a chance.’

Sungjin shook his head at Besgoro's comment.

“Probably not.”

The troll stuttered a few words out before coming to charge against Sungjin. The second troll also did his best to put up resistance against him, but ordinary hunters could only buy few seconds against Sungjin.

‘Clang! Clang! Clang! Splat!’

Sungjin pulled the Moon Specter out of the Troll’s chest. The troll kneeled over.

“Blagh”

He spewed blood from his lips.

‘Good, good!’

Besgoro was enjoying the sight of blood. On the other hand, Sungjin was more preoccupied with picking up the items that had dropped.

Like a housewife picking up ears of grains, Sungjin picked up the fallen items and put them away in the cubes.

“Operator, how much time passed since we came here?”

[7 minutes and 21 seconds.]

Sungjin thought to himself

‘Hmm... I think I was rushing a little bit too much this time.’

He had reserved about 20 minutes per jump; a period of time he had decided on when he was still in the Tahrakhan Plateau.

But that kind of allocation of time only made sense due to the fact that he was thinking in terms of the wide open area of the Plateau where searching for trolls would take a long time. It was only made worse by the fact that the 'Kill X number of mobs to summon Boss' style raid caused the Hunters to scatter across a wide geographical area, making it time-consuming to search for Trolls.

On this map, the 'Priestess Kerenis' was always found on a single predetermined location at the highest and the most central point in the city, so finding trolls was extremely easy.

'I should start estimating the time based on the terrain of the raid.'

It wasn't like Sungjin had perfectly memorized every detail of every Raid, but he had beaten every raid boss with the exception of the one that killed him.

He would be able to make a fairly good estimate on the time he would need per raid. Sungjin returned to the Temple; there was no place better suited for searching for trolls.

Sungjin sat on the stairs as he inspected the items he had obtained this time.

‘This is probably worth... 4000 coins.’

‘This is probably 2000... no 1500 is better. Yeah, I can’t even imagine anyone really wanting this thing.’

He was calculating the worth of the items he had obtained. Normally, he would pass through the Black market once, and when he returned to the Ninety Nine Nights, he wouldn’t leave again for the night. But Sungjin planned to spend his day differently.

‘Put items up for auction, eat dinner and wait for the Receipts to arrive, and head back out into the market again.’

He had heard that 7th circle and higher spell books were extremely expensive, almost impossible to buy with raid rewards alone.

‘I also want to buy ‘Star of the Nameless’... and since I collected two Enhancement stones... time to go visit ‘Smithy of Argo’.’

From experience, he had nowhere near the number of coins needed. Sungjin finished calculating the prices of the six items he had obtained through ‘troll hunting’ and stood back up.

“Pursuit of Justice”

For the third and last time, he activated the dimensional teleportation.

Once he arrived at the third instance of the Temple, Sungjin wanted to step out and begin the search for the hunters, but then he heard battle ensue from within the temple.

Sungjin entered deeper into the interior of temple when he saw

“Boom”

The troll ‘Berserker’ landing a shot to the head of the ‘Guard’ with a hammer.

“Pffk”

A direct hit on the head, the Guard died instantly spewing blood.

“Tsk...”

Sungjin frowned. There was not even enough time to save the man. The only thing left for Sungjin to do was take revenge; to avenge his death.

Sungjin snuck up behind the ‘Berserker’ as the troll was taking a breather, and stabbed him in the back once he was in range.

‘Squelch’

The strike would have the 'Assassin' passive applied on it which he had obtained today. The ambushed Berserker died on the spot. Sungjin withdrew his sword.

The interior of the temple was a mess. The corpse of the Raid boss, her four Guardians, and now the corpses of hunters also littered the ground.

Sungjin who had long been around corpses of hunters felt no desire to stick around in such a place. He wanted to collect the fallen items and leave the place when

“Cough”

Within the Temple, Sungjin heard a sound from the other side of the pillar. He immediately headed towards the source of the sound. There lay a tall and pale westerner, 'Goliath'. He was propped up against the pillar, bleeding out.

He must have been gravely injured by the 'Berserker'. Sungjin approached him.

“Hey, are you okay?”

“How... Cough cough”

He seemed to want to say something, but he stopped to cough up

blood. His state seemed dire.

“Who are you...”

Sungjin frowned as he answered

“Focus on the important things first. Do you have potions?”

The man barely answered.

“I...drank them all”

Now that he said it, Sungjin noticed the large amounts of empty potion bottles strewn about the ground. After staring at the man for a second, Sungjin took out a Medium Recovery Potion.

The Medium Recovery potion healed up to 1000 HP; Sungjin whose HP exceeded 50,000 had no use for such a small potion.

“Go ahead and drink this for now. If your bleeding stops, you won’t have to worry about dying at least.”

But the man shook his head.

“I’m not bleeding out. Cough”

Sungjin took a closer look, and as the man had said, he was

without a scratch.

“Then?”

“I am afflicted by... poison from the cursed Chalice...”

“...Ah”

He was not taken out by the troll. As he was tanking the boss, he had fallen victim to Kerenis’s weapon. One of his legs was bloated containing a deep shade of purple.

“Don’t you have any antidote?”

“I had one, but I already used it earlier against the Anaconda. I didn’t expect the Priestess to have her own poison attack...”

Sungjin couldn’t help but slap his forehead.

“If you are the main tank...”

‘You should keep a minimum of two’

He wanted to say, but he stopped himself. There was no reason to lecture a dying man. Sungjin stared at him for a moment longer before saying

“Operator, get me the large Recovery Potion.”

He retrieved the large recovery potion he just received recently and handed it to the man. He looked at Sungjin for a moment

“Th...Thanks.”

He expressed his gratitude and then drank the potion. Large Potion heals 10,000 HP. With this, he would be able to hold on for few more minutes at least. Sungjin asked the man

“Hey go ahead and ask the operator. How much longer you have until the poison’s duration ends.”

The man turned to the cube to ask the Operator

“Operator... how much time is left... on this poison?”

[Kerenis’s Lethal Toxin, 8 minutes 12 seconds remaining.]

The man fell into despair.

“It’s over. I calculated earlier... 10,000 HP is lost every minute. I tried to hold on drinking every potion I carried with me, but I don’t have...”

As the name would suggest, Lethal Toxin was a dangerous poison. If he weren't the tank, he wouldn't have been able to last this long. Sungjin frowned as well.

‘Even if I hand over every potion I have ever received... it still wouldn't be enough...’

He had never bought a single potion; he did not need them. Especially once he got the ‘Vampire Ring’.

The only things he carried with healing properties were the Large Recovery potion which he had already handed over, few medium potions and a handful of small potions.

Although he could extend the man's life for a few more minutes, it was meaningless; his death was already set in stone.

‘What should I do?’

But the man interrupted him.

“Thanks for trying, but... I think this is the end for me.”

Sungjin couldn't just watch a man die before his eyes without doing anything.

‘But there's nothing you can do.’

Besgoro said. Sungjin bit his lips. But a thought occurred to him.

‘Wait...’

He took out the ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’. He could use the active skill once a day, and it had not been used yet. Sungjin gingerly opened the book.

‘If it’s blank... this man will die... and if not...’

He thought as he opened the page. Luckily there was a text. Sungjin unhesitatingly read out the content.

“While Guan Yu was busy playing [Go](#) with Ma Liang, he began an incision on his skin, grafting out the part affected by poison. Medicine was applied on the wound, and the skin was sewed back together with thread.”

The man stared at Sungjin, curious as to why he had begun reading verses out of a book. Sungjin noticed his gaze but continued reading.

“Surgery complete, Guan Yu stood up laughing and said ‘my arm feels as good as new, there is no pain. Doctor, you have the hands of a god,’ as he stretched his arms, moving them as he normally would.”

Once Sungjin finished reading the verses, the Book automatically closed itself.

[Seance of 'Hua Tuo' Activated!]

[Passive skill 'Enhance White Magic(IV) applied]

[Active skill 'Techniques of the God of Healing' (I) available for instant cast]

Hearing the name of the skill calmed him down.

“Whew...”

Sungjin took a breather. The man continued to stare at him without a clue about what was happening.

“What... What was that just now?”

Sungjin grinned.

“What do you think it is? It's a way to save you.”

Sungjin placed his hand on the bloated leg and said

“Techniques of the God of Healing”

A bright light burst forth from his hands.

“Mister Hunter! Please take a look at my wares! I’ve got new shipment!”

Sungjin made his way through the market with light-hearted steps. He had gained quite a lot from this raid:

Items and coins from the raid reward

Items to put on the auction house obtained through ‘Troll Hunting’.

And finally a white coin he obtained from saving a dying man.

Shopping is always joyful. If one is rich.

“Hmm~ hm~~”

Sungjin hummed a tune as he strolled through the Market.

Now, on the context of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms:

This is perhaps one of the best known stories of Guan Yu and his ridiculous manliness. But on the other hand, it also features one of the most mystical figures in Romance of the Three Kingdoms; The miracle worker Hua Tuo.

I know this story off the top of my head, having been obsessed with the three brothers (Liu Bei, Guan Yu, Zheng Fei) as a child.

So here's the translated version of the text that I've read as a child on the scene described in MHK.

It was late in the war against Wei. Guan Yu is nearing the end of his life. The wars between Wu, Wei, and Shu became intensified as armies grew increasingly larger and better trained.

Guan Yu was tasked with the protection of a large hotly contested region, and as usual, he personally participated in the battle.

However, he was hit by a poisoned arrow and was forced to withdraw to recuperate.

The poison quickly spread deep into his bone, and his condition worsened despite resting. Worried for his father's life, his son calls for the legendary Doctor Hua Tuo.

After Hua Tuo inspected the wound, he announced that the severity of the wound and the spreading of the poison demanded immediate medical attention. Hua Tuo requested that Guan Yu's mouth be gagged, and also be tied to a sturdy pillar, with a minimum of four strong men to hold him down.

Guan Yu asks shocked "Why are such things necessary?"

To which Hua Tuo replies

“The procedure is extremely violent and painful; I will need to cut open the skin, remove the affected tissue and scrape away the poisoned surface of the bone. Only when all the poison has been removed can I apply medicine and sew close the wound. A man will go mad from pain and resist animalistically, making the procedure impossible without complete and thorough restraint.”

Guan Yu laughs.

“How can I call myself a man if I let myself be affected by a small cut? Worry not, Doctor. I shall cause you no trouble with the procedure. I will play Go with Ma Liang to pass the time so please be at ease and operate upon my arm.”

Guan Yu sat down in front of the Go board and began to play. Ma Liang couldn't help but watch nervously as he saw Hua Tuo begin cutting away and drawing blood.

Guan Yu did not bat an eye. Undistracted by the surgery, he began winning against Ma Liang who in turn was very distracted by the disturbing sound of flesh and bone being scraped out of Guan Yu's arms. Guan Yu laughed as he pointed out simple mistakes Ma Liang was making during their game.

An hour passed and the scraping of the bone was complete. Hua Tuo applied medicine and took a needle, sewing thread into the skin of the arm, shutting it close. He tightly wrapped the bandage around Guan Yu's arm, completing the procedure.

Guan Yu continued to play on.

“Surgery is complete, sir Guan Yu” Hua Tuo said, incredulous that Guan Yu would not notice that the vicious ordeal was over.

“Oh? I see that you are done. I say, my arm is as good as new! There is no pain!” He said, moving his arms as if he really felt no pain. “Your surgery skill is on par with the Gods of healing.”

“Surgery is one thing, I have never met a man so tolerant of pain.” Hua Tuo commented, bowing deeply. “I have never met a man with so much valor.”

“Indeed. I have lived and breathed on the battlefield as long as I have lived, and yet I have never felt as uncomfortable around a wound as I have felt today watching the surgery be performed before my eyes” Ma Liang said, wiping away sweat and taking a breather.

“It is thanks to the god-like skill of the Doctor that I am able to do this” Guan Yu said, as he used his newly operated arm to place the winning stone onto the board.

Chapter 077 – Black Market Eighth Shopping

“Starting bid 4000 and instant buyout at 4500 please.”

Auction House ‘Time is Money Plan’

Sungjin was putting up the items he had obtained today for auction, handing them to the three pig brothers.

“Starting bid 1500, instant buyout at 2000 for this one.”

“Understood, Mister Hunter.”

One item from Raid Reward, and six items from the Troll Hunt; Seven items in total were put up for auction before he returned to Ninety Nine Nights.

Cain greeted Sungjin with tail wags.

“Woof Woof!”

Sungjin wanted to pet Cain by kneeling as usual. But Cain’s head was within reach without having to bend over. Sungjin was amazed.

‘When I first got him, he was shorter than my knee...’

Cain was growing with each passing chapter. Sungjin said after placing his hand on top of his head

“If you keep growing like this, you’ll be taller than me at some point”

At his words,

“Woof!”

Cain barked some more. As he grew taller, his voice also grew deeper. When he was smaller his barks were on the cute side, but now it sounded sturdy and dependable.

Now that he took the time to take a closer look at Cain, Cain was starting to exude a mystical aura like that of his mother (or perhaps Grandmother) Ahenna.

“Good. Grow and become stronger Cain. That makes me happy.”

While Sungjin was exchanging greetings with Cain,

“Brrr”

The sound of a horse could be heard coming from the stable as if Shadowrun was appealing for attention.

He couldn't call Shadowrun due to not having any opportunity within the Dark Elven City, so his mount remained neglected.

'Hey Kei, can you place me on top of Shadowrun? I have to talk to him about something.'

"I know you are a ghost, but how can you communicate with a horse?"

Besgoro answered

'Long time comrades of the battlefield can understand each other without words. Like you and that wolf.'

It was somewhat a plausible explanation. Sungjin walked up to Shadowrun to do as he asked. Cain who was following closely behind

"Grr!"

Growled threateningly; he still seemed to dislike Shadowrun. Sungjin took Besgoro off of his head and placed it on top of the saddle of the horse. Leaving it was no problem because there was no one around to take it away or steal it.

Despite 'Ninety Nine Nights' being an inn, it was reserved solely for Sungjin's use. Well, to be more accurate, the entirety of the

Black Market was created for the sole purpose of Sungjin's use.

If he were to leave a coin on the market grounds, the same coin would remain there indefinitely day after day undisturbed. That is, if the hunter who put it there leaves it alone.

Sungjin returned to the interior of the 'Ninety Nine Nights' along with Cain. Inside

"Welcome back, Master."

The Genie Soldamyr

"Good work today, sir."

And Innkeeper Dalupin awaited him. Sungjin replied to their greetings and took a seat at the table.

"Should I prepare a meal?"

Sungjin nodded.

"Yes, please do."

He had many things to do tonight after dinner.

"Is there something you would like to order...?"

‘What should I pick?’

Sungjin tapped on the table trying to remember the past. One menu finally popped into his head.

“Chicken. Korean style. Half of them fried, other dipped in sauce. 500cc glass of beer. Get Cain a fried chicken.”

“Understood, Right away.”

Dalupin left for the kitchen. Sungjin beckoned Soldamyr.

“Soldamyr, please come closer.”

“Yes Master”

“I put up seven items up for auction today. I don’t know how many of them would sell today, but I think we can expect about 30,000 coins.”

Soldamyr couldn’t help but show surprise at Sungjin’s words.

“What an amazing amount of earnings.”

“And on top of that, there’s 10,000 coins from the Raid Reward as well... so expect about 40,000 coins to be available later today.

Once we finish dinner and get the receipts, let's head back out into the market and buy a 7th class or higher spell book from a shop."

"Understood, Master."

Not long after, Dalupin reemerged from the kitchen with freshly fried chicken and a glass full of cold beer. Sungjin first picked up the fried chicken and took a bite.

The crispy skin of the chicken gave way to the soft juicy meat hidden within. The juices which oozed out of the meat was still hot. Sungjin reached over and took a swig of his beer.

"Ahh~"

Sungjin wiped away the foam from his lips and took another bite out of the chicken.

'Bang!'

Sungjin put down the glass of beer. It was his third cup. He had emptied the cup to the point where no foam remained. The drinks were just as good as the food served in Ninty Nine Nights.

He wanted to drink more, but if he took any more than now, it would affect his reason for shopping and perhaps even affect his ability to fight tomorrow. From experience, three glasses of beer

was his safe limit.

Sungjin expressed his gratitude to Dalupin.

“I ate really really well Dalupin.”

Dalupin bowed. He probably would have known without Sungjin saying anything, judging from the fact that the fried chicken was reduced to clean bones.

Within the raids, Dalupin's care and cooking were one of the few sources of comfort.

Sungjin exited the inn while rubbing his full stomach. The sun was setting in the distance dyeing the sky orange. The Auction house operated until sundown; afterwards the receipts for the day would arrive.

Sungjin sat on the rocking chair situated on the outside of the inn and watched the sun go down while he waited for his food to digest. Once the sun finally set below the horizon

‘Ring ring’

A delivery boy appeared out of nowhere, riding a bicycle. Upper body of a pigeon, lower body of a human; a pigeon demihuman. Dalupin came out of the inn to accept the deliveries.

All of it were for Sungjin; no wonder since Sungjin was the only customer in the entire market.

Dalupin thanked the delivery boy.

“Thank you for your work.”

The pigeon delivery boy completed the transfer of parcel and then

‘Ring Ring’

Got back on the bicycle and returned to the darkness. Sungjin wordlessly held his hands out towards Dalupin. He handed over everything he had received.

There were six receipts. Out of nine total items put up for auction including two from before and seven from this time, six out of nine were sold today. Sungjin read through them.

Receipt – 4700 Black Coins. The item ‘Helm of Fire resistance’ which you had put on auction was sold for a total of...

Sungjin only briefly scanned the first receipt. For the rest, he only checked the amounts.

‘1500’

‘3700’

‘4100’

While he was checking his receipts

‘Hmm?’

The last receipt caught his eye.

‘12,000’

Receipt – 12000 Black Coins

The item ‘Armantine – Spear of Paralysis’ which you had put on auction was sold for a total of 12,000 Coins to the ‘God of Spears’.

Place the receipt into the cube to instantly redeem the amount.

There were two points of surprise in this receipt.

First, someone spent 12,000 coins in one go. The next was the fact that they obtained the title of ‘God’.

‘God of Spears’

Sungjin knew just one person from the previous life who managed to obtain that title. One of the final 10 members.

“Ryushin...”

He utilized Ancient Chinese Spear techniques and most certainly reached a ‘God’ like level of skill. Obtaining ‘God’ tier title was difficult otherwise.

‘I guess... he managed to survive until now as well.’

If his skill was anything like in the previous life, it was no surprise that he would have survived until now. Except for an extremely unlikely and excruciating situation, like if all four others turned against him to try and kill him, he would have had no trouble surviving. Of course, all 10 of the final members were all within that level of skill.

Sungjin reminisced about him for a moment.

‘Hey, Sungjin. Don’t you think as ‘God of Spears’ and ‘God of Swords’, we should find out once and for all who’s better?’

His skill was undeniably great. But along with his skill came an incredibly high pride in his ability. With pride came ego and

excessive competitive spirit.

If anyone managed to get higher contribution point than him, he would be unable to contain himself and explode.

‘You fucking retarded Operator, how the fuck did I get so little?’

This side of him made him difficult to deal with.

‘If I ignore that side... he was a good guy... maybe... we will see each other again.’

After five chapters, that is to say, after Kutan Desert the number of survivors numbered at 600,000. Since then, three more chapters have passed.

Although Sungjin had no idea of the exact number, the amount should have significantly decreased by now. It was about time for Sungjin to start running into at least one of the previous final members.

Especially since Sungjin had ‘Trollseeker Marble’ which allowed him to take a look at many times more hunters per round, so chances of running into them had increased. Sungjin took a moment to think about them again.

‘Araujo, Ryushin, Nada, Umkhuba, Ilich, Hildebrandt, Shunsuke, Mustafa, and Edward.’

Through the many hunts they shared, Sungjin had seen their personalities, even the worst parts of them which were revealed in moments of crisis. They were all individuals of incredible skill and talent, but not all of them had a stellar character.

Sungjin had divided them into groups worthy of ‘Baptism’ and those unworthy.

‘The most desirable is... Probably Nada. And the least desirable is...’

Sungjin was interrupted.

[Attention Please.]

[‘Spellmaster’ has succeeded in completing the Unique Legendary omnibus ‘Edda – Norse Mythology’]

[All other copies will be destroyed, and the owners will be refunded by 500 coins.]

Sungjin stared at the cube.

‘Spellmaster...’

There was only one person who could have possibly earned that

title. The person he wanted least to baptise.

‘Edward.’

Sungjin stood up as if he sat on lava. He didn’t have time to waste; he had to get stronger.

He had to get strong enough to the point where he could take on all 9 of the previous final 10 and win alone. Sungjin shoved the stack of receipts into the cube.

[27500 Black Coins obtained.]

Sungjin verified the amount and said loudly

“Soldamyr”

Calling over his loyal Genie. Sungjin had called for him in an uncharacteristic tone, and Soldamyr hurriedly emerged from the inn looking a little shocked.

“You called?”

“Let’s go. To buy the spellbook.”

His master's expression was grim. Soldamyr lowered his head lower than usual and said respectfully

“Yes Master”

Before heading out to the Market, Sungjin stopped by the Stables. Besgoro was still on top of Shadowrun.

‘They should have had enough time to speak.’

Sungjin picked him up and said

‘Equip’

And put Besgoro back on top of his head. He could see clearly in the dark once more. Sungjin said to him

“Mister Besgoro, if you have anything to say, please tell me. Since you and I share the same spell list.”

‘Got it.’

Seeing his owner prepare to head somewhere

“Woof!”

Cain followed closely behind. Sungjin left with Cain and

Soldamyr towards the darkened market. This was the first time he was heading towards the market after sundown, with the exception of heading to 'Darker than Black' at four thirty.

Chapter 078 – Black Market Eighth Shopping (2)

Sungjin and his three comrades strolled into the Black Market in the dark. Unlike its name, the market was bright despite the night.

Sungjin passed the center of the market and the auction house towards the west, where the spell books were piled up into a large mound in shops. There were five such shops.

Five colors ‘Blue Red Green White and Black’ schools of magic each had their own stands and vendors. The vendors were all half human half dragons, only the color of their scales was different.

Sungjin first walked up to the stall run by the blue colored dragonkin. In the previous chapter of Tahrakhan Plateau, Sungjin had earned the title of ‘Blue Mage’.

If the mana costs were the same, picking the school of magic with the most bonus was a no brainer.

[The Blue Magic Shop ‘Blue Hole’ is run by Merchant Lochness.]

[This shop sells various kinds of Blue Magic Spellbooks.]

Once Sungjin entered the shop, the Blue Dragonkin greeted him.

“Welcome. Pray, what does thee seeketh?”

“I just want to look around for now.”

Like his color would suggest, the Blue Dragonkin had a cool and calm personality.

“Do as you please.”

Sungjin walked up to the spellbooks. Soldamyr began his explanations.

“Blue Magic focuses on illusions and transformations. But it also covers Ice and Lightning magic, so it has plenty of destructive power.”

Sungjin checked the book covers. The names of the spells were written on the front.

The “Ice Shield” he had seen before, to “Ice Bolt”, “Blizzard Storm”, “Confusion”. ‘Flight’, etc. A dozen or so spellbooks were on the table.

“Anything you’d recommend?”

“The only ones I could recommend to my master would be this... and this.”

Soldamyr picked out two volumes and handed them to Sungjin. One was 'Teleport', and the other was the 'Mana Shield'. Sungjin was planning on picking them up and reading the information sheet

But even before he could, Soldamyr already began explanation for his choices.

"Teleport is a spell that moves you to the location you can see with your eyes. It is 6th class magic. Since it moves you to where you want to be moved in the distance, it would be a great asset in reducing the amount of time necessary to move about."

"Location I can see? You mean I could go anywhere? So if it's like that Desert or Tahrakhan Plateau where there are no major obstacles, I could potentially go anywhere on the map at will?"

"Ah... of course it uses more mana the further you are trying to go. If you do not have enough mana, you'll stop somewhere along the way."

"Hmm... I understand."

Sungjin picked up the 'Mana Shield'. He was well aware what this spell did because many mages in the late game used it. Soldamyr began his explanation anyway.

"7th class magic which substitutes damage taken with MP instead of HP"

“But I almost never get hit at all”

“I understand. However in the future... Since you have a sword that absorbs mana per hit I thought that it synergizes well with you, is all.”

‘Sword that absorbs mana’ probably referred to Moon Specter. He was right. Although he didn’t need it any time soon, keeping it in mind was probably a good idea.

Taking one more look at the books, Sungjin picked them up and asked the Dragon Kin.

“How much are these two together?”

“Teleport is 6300 Coins, and Mana Shield is 11200.”

“Oh...”

He had known that high tier spell books were expensive, but it was much more expensive than he had thought. No matter how affluent he got, he felt that he should check out his options before buying any.

Sungjin placed them back down for now.

“I’ll go check out the other shops first before I decide.”

“By all means.”

The next shop was run by a Red Dragonkin.

[The Red Magic Shop ‘Red Burn’ is run by Merchant Cahal.]

[This shop sells various kinds of Red Magic Spellbooks.]

“Hiya Human!”

The Dragonkin must have personalities matching the color of their scales, Sungjin thought.

“No need to check other shops! Red magic is the best!”

This shop owner was quite motivated. Soldamyr whispered to Sungjin

“Red Magic is the most destructive school of magic, focused on the offense. For recommendations...”

Soldamyr went and picked up “Inferno” and “Volcano”. Just reading the name gave Sungjin clues on what they did. Soldamyr gave explanations on them.

“Inferno spreads out in a straight line and deals damage over time, whereas Volcano is able to deal damage on a far larger scale.”

“Hmm... I see.”

Sungjin nodded and checked out the other books. Then a particularly fancy book caught his eye.

The entire book seemed to be shimmering in intense heat, and the title read “Meteor Strike”

“This is...?”

At his question,

“Ah... that...”

Soldamyr hesitated. But then he was interrupted.

“That’s the best spell there is!”

The Red Dragon answered on his behalf.

“That spell summons a giant meteor which is capable of destroying everything... if you have that spell, you can instantly wipe out all your foes in a split second!”

Soldamyr added onto its explanation.

“Yes, it is a very high impact spell... if you are able to utilize it properly, you could probably do significant damage to all enemies in the map from the start. But it is a 9th class spell... Master, you will not be able to use it at your current state, and the price will be unbelievably high.”

Sungjin didn't hesitate to ask

“How much is it?”

“137540 Coins”

Sungjin tilted his head when he heard the amount.

“What?”

The Red Dragon let out steam from the nose as it answered

“I said it's 137540 Coins. And as always, the price is non-negotiable.”

An item past 100,000 Coins in cost. It was the first he's ever heard of it. Sungjin couldn't help but be surprised, so Soldamyr added

“Spell Books always increase in cost as it moves up the tier list. By 9th class magic, it is a country scale spell so the price is something that can’t help but be very high.”

Price being high was fine and all, but 120,000 was too over the top. Even for Sungjin who managed to sell up to seven items in the auction house after one raid would need to save up coins for 3~4 raids to be able to afford it.

“Ok... Next shop”

“What?! you’re not buying?”

Sungjin left behind the Red Dragon and entered the next shop. It was the White Magic Shop kept by a White Dragon. The place Sungjin had originally intended to come from the start.

[The White Magic Shop ‘White Sky’ is run by Merchant Marses.]

[This shop sells various kinds of White Magic Spellbooks.]

The White Dragon looked graceful.

“What do you seek, Hunter? Take your time searching.”

His voice was low and dignified. Sungjin first headed towards the

invisibility magic. He did not have to search very far. Lifting it up, he asked

“What class is this?”

After hearing that spells could go as much as hundreds of thousands of coins, he wanted to verify its price first.

“It is 5th class”

It wouldn't be very expensive. Sungjin kept the book and checked other spell books as well.

“I do want a recovery type magic as well...”

Even though Sungjin wouldn't need it, he wouldn't know when it might be handy to have it around, like in the case of the previous round. And he wouldn't be able to call forth the Seance of Hua Tuo each and every time.

Even if the effects weren't as impressive, having few recovery magic would be for the better. Soldamyr picked one and handed it to Sungjin.

It was the most famous recovery magic of all: 'Heal'. Sungjin accepted it as he asked

“What class?”

“3rd Class. The barrier to entry is not very high, but the effect depends on the Magic Power, so those without high Magic Power can’t use it effectively.

“Hmm, you’re right.”

Sungjin nodded and continued to check other items.

“Is there anything I can use to undo status effects?”

“Take this one as well.”

Soldamyr handed a second book to Sungjin called ‘Purify’.

“Purify is a spell used to heal status effects. It can remove curses, confusion, charm, and blind.”

“What about poisons?”

“You can get that over there”

Soldamyr pointed towards the green colored shop.

“Ok, I need all of these, how much are these three together?”

“7520 Coins, Sir Hunter”

7520 Coins, in other words, price of a cheap Legendary Item.

“Operator, checkout”

The cube moved to finalize the sale. Sungjin said to the White Dragonkin

“Please send it directly to the Cube.”

“Understood”

While the Operator’s Cube was paying and transferring items, Sungjin noticed another fancy covered spellbook. The book displayed the name “Resurrection”. Sungjin picked it up.

“Revival... is possible?”

It was an amazing ability approaching the realm of God. Sungjin intentionally called forth the information screen this time.

Spellbook – Resurrection

9th Class White Magic

Revive one deceased creature.

Only usable within 3 minutes of death.

Soldamyr spoke from the side.

“Possible...yes. But in order to make use of it, you need a much higher Magic Power. With your current level of magic power, it won't even activate.”

‘My Magic Power?’

Whenever he used Fireball or Chain Lightning, he noticed improvements in power as his stats rose, but he never thought too deeply about the actual value of Magic Power he had aside from the ratio of how he invested his stat points.

Sungjin asked the Operator

“Operator, what's my current level of Magic Power?”

[3119, 3587 after bonuses are applied.]

Sungjin turned his head to ask Soldamyr.

“How much more do I need?”

Soldamyr tilted his head.

“Truth be told, I do not know this numeric system of measuring Magic Power so I do not know for sure... But from my observations of your spell power, I would estimate that it should be somewhere close to 20,000.”

20,000 Magic power. His highest stat was Dex, and it was only at 9000. He would have to raise his Magic power for a long time still.

“9th class magic are originally classification of spells that rival the power of God. Your Magic Power is rising quickly...but you can't help it that it is not immediately available. Also...”

Sungjin could guess what he wanted to say next.

“Because it's a 9th class Magic... It would require an absurd amount of Coins.”

Sungjin held the ‘Resurrection’ and asked the White Dragon.

“How much is this?”

“141857 Coins.”

“Cough”

Sungjin let out a false cough hearing the price. It was even more expensive than Meteor Strike.

“Ah, understood.”

Sungjin headed to the Green Magic Shop next. But on the way, he had a question.

“Hey... so what’s the 9th class spell for Green Magic?”

Soldamyr stared at Sungjin for a moment before answering.

“To tell you the truth... It’s the spell I was developing for the past few hundred years within my lamp...”

“What is it?”

At Sungjin’s insistence, he finally answered.

“It is Time Reversal Magic”

“Hmm?”

“As you might imagine, it’s magic used to go back in time. But... I mean...”

Sungjin did not listen to Soldamyr all the way before entering the shop. He immediately asked the owner

“Do you sell Time Reversal Magic here?”

The Green Dragonkin couldn't help but open his eyes wide at his question. And after searching through a pile of books, he took out a fancy and well-decorated book and handed it to Sungjin.

As expected, the book had ‘Time Reversal’ printed on the front. Sungjin looked behind him towards Soldamyr and asked

“Go back? In time? How far?”

Chapter 079 – Black Market Eighth Shopping (3)

Sungjin asked holding up the spellbook

“If I use this... and go back in time... my memory remains intact?”

“Yes, of course.”

“If I reverse time, how many seconds can it go back?”

“That depends on the Magic Power.”

As he listened to Soldamyr, Sungjin felt

‘If I want to master magic as well, I’m going to need more stat points.’

The effectiveness of a spell is proportional to Magic Power. And in order to properly utilize it, he also needed a fairly high value of Mind Power which affects MP.

Sungjin originally wanted to continue using swordsmanship as his primary source of damage and use magic on the side as a backup support utility. But the more he found out about what magic was capable of, the more he wanted it.

“According to my research, Magic Power affects the rate in which you go back in time, and Mind Power affects the duration of time reversal. With Master’s current level of Magic and Mind power, draining your entire pool would result in some fraction of a second of time reversal.”

Of course, such a small reversal of time would prove to be useless. Sungjin asked while holding the book up.

“How much is this?

The Blue Dragonkin skipped straight to the price.

“162414”

It was a monstrous sum. But considering its effects, it was a reasonable amount. In a fight against a master, being able to go back in time for even a few seconds would be a significant advantage.

‘And...’

Even omitting combat usefulness, he could think of a few other utility for it. Sungjin put down the book for now.

‘I am glad that I came.’

Even though he was unable to afford the spells he wanted for now, these spells would be immensely useful in the future. Sungjin headed to the Green Magic shop next.

“Welcome. Is there something in particular you are looking for?”

The Green Dragonkin was soft-spoken and polite.

“I am looking for magic to nullify poison.”

“Ah, we have that... here.”

The Green Dragonkin searched for and handed Sungjin a Spellbook. ‘Neutralization’. It was a type of purification magic. Soldamyr added an explanation from the side.

“The potency of the purification is affected by Magic Power level. The type and severity of poisons and toxins it can counteract grows with Magic Power.”

“How much is this?”

“It is 3570 Black Coins”

“Hmm... Check out. Please.”

Once Sungjin was done buying the spell he wanted, he asked

“Do you sell 9th class magic here?”

“Of course”

As if he was prepared to hand it over at any time, the Green Dragonkin pulled a book out of a stack and handed the fancy well-decorated book to Sungjin. The book title read ‘Force of Nature’

It was difficult to tell what this spell does with only the name. Sungjin accepted the book and glanced over to Soldamyr. He quickly understood what his Master wanted and began an explanation.

“This magic turns the very environment into a friendly state.”

The explanation was a little lacking. When Sungjin made a face, the Green Dragonkin further gave an explanation.

“Force of nature; It is a spell that makes all animals, plants, and even the unseeable amoeba in the area wish to be helpful to you. For destruction or reconstruction, whatever you wish.”

It was a more detailed explanation than before, but he probably needed to use it first hand to fully understand what it does. Sungjin put down the book for now.

“Thank you for explaining it to me.”

The last place Sungjin went to visit was the Black Magic shop kept by a Black Dragonkin. The Black Dragonkin saw Sungjin enter the store, but he looked annoyed.

“...Huh? If you want something, get it and get out.”

‘How unsociable’

Sungjin checked a few things in the shop.

It was a shop full of curse type magic like ‘Rise of the Undead’ ‘Age’ ‘Confusion’ ‘Slow’. Sungjin asked Soldamyr.

“Any recommendations?”

“From here... something like this would be good.

Soldamyr handed Sungjin a spellbook of ‘Anti Magic Shield’.

“It is a spell which can be prepared ahead of time to block a single incoming spell. A type of magic counter so to speak. Other schools of magic have a similar spell, but none are as versatile or effective as this.”

It sounded useful. Especially considering ‘what happened before’. Sungjin immediately decided to buy it.

“How much is this?”

The Black Dragonkin answered uncaringly.

“6050 Coins.”

It was quite expensive. But Sungjin still wanted the spell. He took a moment to check his funds.

“Operator, how many Black coins do I have left?”

[30358 Coins remaining]

He still had a large sum remaining, but he needed to save money for spending it at ‘Darker than Black’.

‘Star of the Nameless is one thing... I wanted to get one or two more marbles...’

Sungjin began calculating in his head.

‘Let’s see... Teleport was 6300... if I get them both... 12350 Coins... then I wouldn’t have enough for the Star...’

He would have to choose between the two spells. Sungjin deliberated on his choice before finally making up his mind.

‘Since I already have invisibility... I can forgo the teleport for now.’

“I want to buy this please.”

He purchased the ‘Anti Magic Shield’ spellbook. He didn’t need Soldamyr to tell him that he would need strong Magic Power to stop powerful magic.

After buying the spell he needed, he searched for the 9th Class Magic Spell again and found it. The 9th class magic spell was called ‘Summon Black Hole’.

Even the name was terrifying. Soldamyr gave an explanation to Sungjin.

“It is not a well-known spell. The Red Magic spell ‘Meteor Strike’ causes only physical damage...but Summon Black Hole... it causes damage across the dimensions... or so it is said.”

“Hmm... ok.”

Sungjin couldn’t really tell how it worked. Black holes were a difficult concept to grasp to begin with. Once Sungjin was done taking a tour of the Magic Shops, he ended his shopping.

In the end, Sungjin bought five spells; ‘Heal’, ‘Invisibility’, ‘Purify’, ‘Neutralize’, and ‘Anti Magic Shield’.

After taking a look at the spells he purchased, Sungjin realized that they were all supportive magic befitting a magic swordsman rather than a true mage. Since he was a swordsman to begin with, it couldn’t be helped.

‘Later... once I have higher stats... I should be able to use those spells.’

Sungjin left the market and reentered Ninety Nine Nights. He ‘memorized’ all the spells he obtained and went to bed as early as he could.

He still had business to attend to in Darker Than Black.

“Welcome”

The merchant in ‘Darker than Black’ welcomed Sungjin with wide open arms.

“So how goes the hunt?”

“So so.”

Sungjin answered indifferently as he sat down in front of the merchant.

“I have a question for you.”

“Ask anything.”

Sungjin took out the ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’ out of his vest and placed it on top of the table.

“About this”

The man picked up the book and commented

“Ah, this thing... It’s quite fun. I’ve read it at least 10 times I think”

“It’s a great item... but there are moments when it is difficult to read it. Any solutions?”

“Ah...well... if you think so...”

The man pulled out something from his pocket. It was a luxurious looking gold framed Monocle.

“Gourmet’s old monocle. It reads the book on your behalf.”

Gourmet. It was a familiar name. Sungjin searched his memories for a moment before responding.

“Gourmet? The bookshop owner Gourmet?”

“Yes. It is the monocle Gourmet used to wear.”

Sungjin picked it up to check the Operator’s information screen.

Gourmet’s Monocle

Heroic Accessory

Active Skill

Substitute Reading (I) Reads the book on behalf of the user.

Gourmet’s Monocle. He initially had only one bad eye, but through years of intense reading, sight in both eyes went bad.

“This is worth 15,000 Black Coins. Will you buy it?”

Sungjin stared at the item. He had 24308 coins remaining. He wanted to buy this as well as the Star of the Nameless. But instead of those

“... Just give me two more Trollseeker Marbles.”

He chose to buy more marbles instead. Judging from the previous rounds, he had plenty of time left over. Instead of buying items that he wouldn't immediately need, it made more sense to invest in increasing his income. Sungjin took out the three marbles from his pocket.

“And recharge these.”

“Total is 23,000 Coins.”

“Check out.”

Now Sungjin had a total of 5 marbles.

‘Now... I should be able to get almost 4~50,000 coins per raid.’

That was Sungjin's thoughts. Since he purchased spells he needed this time, he could buy the items after the next raid. Sungjin pulled out the White Coin next.

“And... with this...”

The man was surprised each time Sungjin brought the White Coin.

“Where did you get THIS one?”

“A long story. Anyway, you said there’s nothing else other than the holy water that I could be buying with just one coin right?”

“Right.”

Sungjin thought for a moment. Rather than save up White coins, it would be more beneficial to buy and carry a second Holy water of Baptism, since he was expecting to enter 6 realms per chapter.

What if he ran into two hunters he really liked?

“Then give me another one.”

Sungjin flicked the coin over to the man with his thumb, and the man snatched it out of the air. Once he put it away into his vest, he pulled out another vial of ‘Holy Water of Baptism’.

Sungjin also placed this into the cube. He stood up from his seat.

“It was good doing business with you as always.”

“Yeah.”

Sungjin wanted to leave right away. No matter how often he came here he couldn’t get used to it. But on his way out before he

reached the stairs, he suddenly thought of a question.

Sungjin stopped and turned around to reenter the shop to ask the man.

“Hey, I no longer have a problem with making money thanks to the 5 marbles I have purchased... but... My stat points aren’t keeping up. So, is there any way to dramatically increase my stat points?”

The man grinned at Sungjin’s question.

“I have thus said; He who seeks questions get answers and he who seeks answers find questions. I believe you have finally gotten used to how this shop works.”

The man pulled out a small triangular vial about the same size as the Holy Water of Baptism from within his vest. It was filled with Black Liquid.

“It’s an elixir. The moment you drink it, it raises the total amount of unallocated stat points you have.”

Sungjin stared at the vial of black liquid before asking

“So, how much?”

In the early morning when Sungjin arrived at the Ninety Nine Nights, he headed back to bed. But he couldn't sleep.

‘9th circle spells...and the elixir...’

There was a lot on his mind. After spending 20 minutes rolling about the bed and staring up at the ceiling, Sungjin got up from the bed. He picked up the ‘Information sheet’ left behind by Dalupin.

Sungjin carried that downstairs to the lobby, but he was also not feeling very hungry. He said to Dalupin

“One vine of grapes... and two oranges please.”

After ordering two different fruits, Sungjin began to read the content of the information page.

‘Information concerning Magician’s Ivory Tower’

Chapter 080 – Magician's Ivory Tower (1)

Sungjin peeled the orange four ways. Past the peel was the succulent looking meat of the fruit. Sungjin ate the orange with one hand as he continued to read the information page.

Chapter 9 – Magician's Ivory Tower Raid

Objective – Hunt the Mad Magician 'Lenin'

Time limit: 1 hour 30 minutes

What caught his eye was the part where it said 'Chapter 9'.

'Ah... so we're already at this point...'

The reason why Sungjin was acting this way was because of the 10th chapter, the 'Red Dragon's Lair'.

From that point onward, the raid format would change from 5 man teams to 10 man teams. And the Raid boss 'Red Dragon Kal' Ghal' was stronger by over two times than previous Raid bosses.

Being unable to work in groups of 10 would inevitably lead to casualties. And the boss was strong enough that Sungjin had no assurance he could overcome it on his own.

'... I need to better prepare myself for the next raid...'

Sungjin put down the ‘information sheet’ after wrapping up his thoughts. He moved onto final preparations for the raid.

“Operator put 2500 points in strength, 2500 in Dexterity, 1000 in Stamina, 1000 in Magic power and 2009 in Mind power.”

Sungjin initially wanted to try raising Magic power by a large amount to enable the use of ‘9th class magic’ as soon as possible, but taking that route could lead to weakening his overall power.

As he experienced thoroughly during the fight with the Exiled Dark Elf ‘Calian’, neglecting to raise Strength and Dex could lead to instant death against bosses.

‘But if I follow that kind of logic, I should be keeping Master Hunter activated at all times...’

But for now, he was in no position to take away the ‘Adjudicator’, since doing so would effectively cut his income by half. He once again vowed to purchase the Star of the Nameless after this raid.

Sungjin took a moment to recall his memory of this raid’s Hidden Element.

‘Yeah... I remember where it was...’

Since he knew where the hidden element was, he would only

need to use one round of ‘Treasure Hunter’ Active skill to find the hidden boss. From this point onward, Sungjin knew one or more hidden elements of each chapter.

This was due to the fact that past this point in the raids, the other hunters had become aware of them and

‘In that chapter, it was hidden there’

Gossiped about where the previous raid’s hidden elements were found. Completing his preparations, Sungjin peeled the last orange and ate it. But meanwhile

[‘Rajen – Egg of Gold’ has trembled twice.]

The Operator gave an announcement.

‘Oh right...’

He had forgotten again.

“Operator, give me that for a sec.”

The cube ejected the golden egg, and Sungjin inspected it.

Rajenta – Golden Egg

Legendary Egg

Passive Skill

Primordial Tremor (III) – Tremble three times in one day

The bird strives to leave the egg. The egg is the world.

To be born, one must destroy one's world.

‘What’s this? It changed again.’

Sungjin thought to himself. Suddenly the egg shook.

‘Tremble’

Sungjin held onto the egg tightly to prevent himself from dropping it. And then the egg shook a second time.

‘Tremble’

And then a third

‘Tremble’

And at the same time

‘Crack’

The egg burst open, and he could see an eye from within. Sungjin stared at the eye beneath the eggshell. There was a slimy eagle chick blinking within.

The Operator gave an announcement.

[Congratulations. The Legendary Item ‘Rajenta – Golden wing’ Obtained.]

Sungjin carefully placed the egg on top of the table. The eagle broke open its egg and climbed out. And finally, Sungjin realized that the creature was no eagle.

It had the eagle’s head, but with the lion’s body. Besgoro was first to speak.

‘It’s a Griffin.’

That was the case. ‘Rajenta’ was a Griffin’ The wings were golden in color, so a ‘Golden Griffin’. Besgoro gave a suitable title to the creature.

‘The color of the wing suggests a rare breed, so I’d guess it is a Royal Griffin. It must be of a noble birth.’

Soldamyr who stood at the side also commented.

“Oh, it is a Royal Griffin. This breed of Griffins is born with a stronger resistance to magic than any other breeds.”

Cain was wordlessly staring at the baby Griffin with his ears pointing straight up. With everyone watching, Sungjin picked up the Baby Griffin.

The Griffin was a little large considering it was just born. Estimating its size, it looked to be about 60 cms.

“Rawr!”

It let out an adorable cry. And at the same time, a 10 to 1 miniature version of the golden egg appeared in Sungjin’s hands. It was probably similar to Cain’s Wooden figurine for summoning purposes.

Sungjin looked back and forth between the egg and the newborn Griffin. The Griffin stared at Sungjin with big round eyes.

‘Species of birds imprint with the first being they see when they are born, considering the being to be their parents...’

Since the Griffin had the upper body of a bird and lower body of an animal, Sungjin wasn't sure if it was considered avian or mammal. But whichever the case it was, it was clear that Sungjin ought to raise it.

“Operator, how much time is left?”

[Raid will begin 1 hour and 32 minutes from now]

Sungjin took a glance at Dalupin. Dalupin was watching the scene from afar.

“Dalupin, please take care of this child while I am away.”

Dalupin gave a bow.

“Understood, Sir Hunter.”

Meanwhile

“Rawr!”

The baby Griffin sat on top of Sungjin's hands and gave another adorable cry. It's cuteness level knew no bounds. Sungjin spent the remaining time playing with the baby Griffin and was finally teleported away to the Magician's Ivory Tower.

The town was in flames. The burnt wooden structures collapsed and choking ash filled the air.

‘Kyaa!’

A scream could be heard in the distance. It was the scene of hell. At the center stood a lone and pale ivory tower. The Operator gave an introduction.

[Welcome. This is the Magician’s Ivory Tower.]

[It is the place where the Magician Lenin, the one who burnt the town, lives.]

[Please be warned: The mad magician is not the only one who lives here.]

[His dangerous experimental Homunculus also roams the tower.]

As soon as the Operator was done,

“HAHAHAHAHAHAHA! Burn! BURN!”

A silhouette of a mage throwing fireball after fireball into the town from the sky could be seen. This was the Mad Magician Lenin.

His magical attacks burnt all the remaining structures in the town. After exhausting the targets in the town, the Mage flew back to the top of his tower and disappeared.

Sungjin had a thought

‘Wait... If I could fly up there, couldn’t I just go straight to the boss?’

Unlike the Count Dimitri’s castle ruins, this raid had more freedom. If he could fly like the Mad Magician, it looked possible to skip to the end.

Sungjin now had a total of 5 Trollseeker marbles. In order to use all 5 of them, he needed a minimum of 50 minutes. In other words, he had to complete all the parts of the quest within 40 minutes. He had to find a shortcut.

As Sungjin was watching the top of the tower, the other hunters arrived.

[Synchronizing other Hunters.]

The summoned hunters had the following titles: ‘Mountain’, ‘Hoplite’. ‘Highlander’, ‘Green Magician’. It was now difficult to see any ordinary titles; only the best remained alive.

“Greetings.”

“Let’s work together”

Everyone was familiar with the Raids. And among them, the Green Magician raised his hands and

“Anyone found hidden pieces or bosses?”

He asked the group. The ‘Hoplite’ and ‘Highlander’ raised their hands. Sungjin watched for a moment and raised his hands as well. It appeared that only the ‘Mountain’ was still unaware of the existence of hidden pieces and bosses.

“What’s that?”

“So the hidden elements are...”

The ‘Green Magician’ took the time to explain to him what it was about. While watching the interaction, Sungjin had a thought.

‘Looks like it’s about time I started looking seriously for my ‘real comrades’.’

“I didn’t know that...”

The 'Mountain' looked visibly upset due to having missed all those opportunities, but the 'Highlander' offered words of consolation.

“Don't be so disappointed. Hidden pieces are a pain to find, and Hidden bosses are not only well hidden... they are extremely difficult to kill. I've only managed to kill one so far.”

Hoplite asks

“Which one did you get?”

“Me? The Wolfman in Chapter 2. But I haven't seen any ever since.”

“Really? There was something like that in Chapter 2? I killed the Gravekeeper in Chapter 3.”

'Green Magician' jumps in the conversation.

“I met the Gravekeeper too, but two of my teammates got turned into undead so... I had to keep running away until the time-over.”

“I found an exiled dark elf or something last chapter. But after we found him... the tank died in 3 seconds...”

The hunters continued to converse among themselves as Sungjin watched silently. The 'Green Magician' asked Sungjin

“So which one did you find?”

‘All of them’

He couldn’t answer like that. Not to mention they would not believe him.

Sungjin pondered his answer for a moment before responding

“Well... isn’t it more important to consider what we’re going to do this raid?”

At his words, the conversation finally returned to the strategy for this raid.

“So the overall formation should be ‘Mountain’ in the front, followed by ‘Highlander’ and the ‘Adjudicator’, then ‘Hoplite’ with the ‘Green Magician’ in the rear.”

“Green Magician... what kind of magic can you use?”

“I can use healing magic called ‘Regeneration’, ‘Sun’s Aura’, a spell that reduces damage taken...”

While the four men were earnestly discussing the plans for this raid, Sungjin continued to stare off into the distance at the Magician’s Tower. The top of the tower did not end in a point, but

on a flat landing.

The Raid Boss Mad Magician Lenin awaited the hunters at the top level on the 10th floor. Originally, the hunters had to fight through each of the floors to reach the boss.

But it looked like it should be possible to take the Magic Carpet all the way up to the top floor and skip right to the end.

‘If so, I could finish the raid by myself. Otherwise, I’d have to go along with these guys...’

Meanwhile, the hunters were wrapping up the talk.

“Ok let’s do this.”

“Glad to be working with you.”

“Alright, good luck everyone.”

This party seemed to be going in the right direction. At least on the surface.

[Raid will begin in 10 seconds. 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0]

The raid began, and the door to the 1st floor of the tower opened up.

“Let’s go.”

‘Mountain declared, but Sungjin stopped them.

“Wait a minute.”

Sungjin took out the carpet from the Cube

“Flight.”

He flew up the side of the tower alone.

“Hey...”

“Wait!”

Other hunters were staring up at Sungjin. Despite feeling the hot stare on the back of his head, Sungjin continued to climb the tower alone. At the top was a beheaded corpse of a lion.

‘What is this?’

Sungjin thought as he landed on the top floor of the Tower. When he moved closer, he saw a magic circle drawn underneath

the corpse. Like the name would suggest, truly the act of a ‘Mad Magician’.

Sungjin ignored the corpse and looked around for a stairway down. The way was open. If he were to enter through there, he would likely face the boss right away.

Sungjin rode the carpet back down towards the ground and about half way down, he addressed the rest of the hunters.

“You guys cooperate and make your way up the tower as fast as you can. I’ll give you guys a reward if you do.”

“What?!”

Everyone was shocked. Sungjin had become used to that reaction.

“I am going to start at the top and make my way down. Then, until we meet again.”

Sungjin bid them goodbye for now and headed back to the top, towards the stairway.

Note: The egg had the name ‘Ra’ when it was first introduced to us. That time it trembled once a day. After trembling its name then changed to ‘Rajen’ after which it trembled twice a day. And finally, on trembling its name changed to ‘Rajenta’. It then trembled thrice and hatched.

Chapter 081 – Magician's Ivory Tower (2)

Sungjin returned to the top of the tower riding the Magic Carpet where the beheaded lion lay on top of the magic circle formation.

‘Just...why...’

Sungjin looked around the roof. There wasn't anything else worth noting. And from the stairway,

“HAHAHAHAHAHA!”

He could hear the mad laughter of the Magician ‘Lenin’. Sungjin recalled his past memories.

“Freeze! Burn! Die!”

This raid's boss was so out of his mind; he was impossible to predict.

This raid was originally designed to be beaten from the ground floor up to the 10th floor where the boss awaited, but Sungjin jumped to the top and was planning on working his way down. In other words, just one floor down was the raid boss.

On top of the stairs, Sungjin held the Artemio instead of the Blood Vengeance. This weapon was a specialized sword to combat mages. Not only does it reduce damage taken via spells by 20%, but

it could also reflect spells.

‘Whew...’

Sungjin took a deep breath before heading down the stairs. At the center of the tower was a large gaping hole spanning across floors.

Above the void was the Mad Magician, talking to himself.

“Why! Why pick that child over me! I can’t accept it! Damn that senile old man!”

Sungjin who was sneaking his way down the stairs noticed the Magician yelling at thin air and thought

‘Hey... I might be able to finish this faster than I thought’

Most mages aren’t able to deal with Sungjin’s blade up close. If he manages to get close, he could end the fight in a few seconds. Sungjin recited an incantation.

“Freedom from all prying eyes, Invisibility”

Sungjin’s body disappeared from sight. Meanwhile, the crazed Magician Lenin continued to yell at nothing.

“Yes! Right! That has to be it! He must have thought... He must

have believed I would overcome him! Yes! He was afraid of me! Because I am a genius he cannot hope to contain!”*

While he was busy talking to himself, Sungjin continued to sneak upon him. He had earned the ‘Assassin’ title last round. One or two shots should take him out.

“Yes, I am a genius... a genius... I will beat that old one...”

He was now about 2~3 meters from him. When he was about 2 steps away from the boss, Sungjin leapt. But

“You little piece of shit!”

Lenin suddenly disappeared with a flash of light.

“Clang!”

Sungjin’s swords found nothing but air, striking the ground and leaving marks. Lenin reappeared a distance away. The Operator made an announcement.

[Warning! Boss]

[Mad Magician Lenin has appeared!]

Sungjin failed his assassination once again although this was only his second attempt.

‘Why can’t I do it?’

He thought to himself. Lenin took out a staff from under his coat. It was a long stick with three heads decorating one end. A strange staff.

Stranger still, because the heads were alive and moving.

“Woof Woof!”

“Arf!”

“Grrr!”

Each of the heads made noises on their own.

‘Oh yeah, I forgot about that... What weird tastes...’

Sungjin frowned. Lenin said to him

“I knew you were approaching me since a while ago. Cerberus warned me ahead of time, Assassin!”

Cerberus, it seemed to be the name of the three-headed staff.

‘If there are three dog noses, noticing my scent is a foregone conclusion...’

Assassination was difficult to pull off. Sungjin took up a proper fighting pose and prepared his swords. If assassination does not work, all he had to do was defeat it normally.

“Who are you? Did the puppet king send you? Or the old man? I don’t care either way. I will immolate you, freeze the corpse, and then present your severed head.”

He continued to speak nonsense. He was undoubtedly insane, too far gone. Sungjin had no time to listen to his mad ramblings.

The crazed magician Lenin began an incantation.

“Blink”

The boss disappeared. This was the most annoying factor about this boss; the ability to instantly teleport to any location within the tower. He heard an incantation from behind

“Burn everything in your path, Fireball”

Sungjin hesitated for a moment before deciding to use the spell he had just learned.

“Spell-devouring magic field, Anti-Magic Shield!”

He had Besgoro recite the incantation with the substitute casting as he also prepared his own spell.

“Burn everything in your path”

Lenin’s fireball reached Sungjin first and collided with his shield.

‘Boom!’

Luckily the spell held. Sungjin backed up slightly upon impact, but the embers did not fly his way. Sungjin grinned as he said

“Fireball”

He fired a counter attack. Seeing the spell fly his way, Lenin chanted

“Blink”

And disappeared once again.

“Boom!”

The fireball exploded.

‘... He dodged?’

Sungjin took a look around, but Lenin was not too far from the blast site.

“Grrr...”

He must have not been able to totally escape taking damage. Sungjin grinned once more as he charged towards the enemy, who responded by chanting an incantation.

“Awaken my blades, and defend me. Living Edge”

Soon, autonomous swords came to life and circled around him. They didn’t look very threatening, but they weren’t something he should ignore.

‘Clang! Bang!’

Sungjin chased after Lenin while parrying away the living swords. The magician retreated while waving his Staff to ward Sungjin away. Despite his inaccurate swings, the three dog heads attached to the ends

“Grrr!”

Kept on trying to bite Sungjin.

‘...Annoying...!’

Sungjin knocked the swords aside with his blade and tried to strike the dogheads, but

“Blink”

The Magician escaped a short distance away. Sungjin was starting to become irritated. He now had five marbles. In order to use all five of them, he required a minimum of 10 minutes each or 50 minutes in total.

So he had to clear the main objective within 40 minutes. He didn’t have time to waste at the boss. Sungjin returned the Moon Specter to the sheath and held Artemio alone.

With one sword, he held it straight ahead; he was preparing his sure-kill strike. He thought to himself while looking at his reflection on the sword.

‘Magic reflect... at a perfect timing...’

He was planning on using it. But

“Freedom from all prying eyes, Invisibility”

The Magician chose to hide instead. Sungjin charged ahead towards the last seen location but stopped himself. Even if he

wanted to use ‘Ghastly Wail’, he had to locate his enemy first. Sungjin took a look around.

He couldn’t see any clues as to the magician’s location.

‘Grrr’

And then

“Spreading Death, Orb of Ice”

From a corner, the air began to freeze as a ball of ice began to form and slowly approach Sungjin. He didn’t have enough time to cast Anti-Magic Shield. He would most likely not succeed in reflecting it with the magic reflect.

“Solidify”

Sungjin attempted to block it with Sael’s Mantle, but the “Solidification” took too long.

‘Du du du’

Sungjin had to take a few of the initial icicles with his bare back. He could hear Lenin’s laughter.

“Hahaha! Idiot! Moron! Did you believe you could dare face off

against a great Magician such as I?”

Sungjin was beginning to become enraged.

‘I was going to save this for later...’

But he needed him to fight against a Mage.

Sungjin quickly pulled out Soldamyr’s lamp and rubbed it. Soon the Blue Genie appeared and greeted his master.

“Did you summon me, Master?”

But he didn’t have time to respond.

“Fireball!”

A fireball came flying from nowhere. Soldamyr immediately responded in kind.

“Impenetrable glacial wall! Ice Wall!”

A wall of Ice appeared before Sungjin

“Boom!”

And it blocked the Fireball just in time. Soldamyr quickly grasped the situation.

“An invisible enemy.”

Sungjin replied

“I don’t care how, find him!”

Soldamyr immediately cast another spell.

“All-freezing winds! Razor sharp ice! Blizzard Storm!”

At his command, the entirety of the room began to freeze up. Sungjin also felt chilly, but he gritted his teeth and surveyed the surroundings. He saw an outline of a person appear in the blizzard.

‘There...’

Sungjin turned towards the location

“Pa!”

He shot the Moon Spectre. The sword flew straight towards the snowman but

“Blink”

The enemy escaped once again.

“Haa”

Sungjin returned his sword to his side. Realizing his invisibility was countered, he released the spell. The Magician was covered in ice. Sungjin asked Soldamyr,

“Is there a way to counter his blink?”

Soldamyr answered

“Blink allows instantaneous movement through space, but he is unable to cancel the transfer. If you attack multiple locations simultaneously...”

The Magician attacked meanwhile.

“Melt the skin and rot the bones. Killing Cloud”

A purple fog appeared from the staff. Sungjin could tell just from the color that the fog was dangerous. While he was wondering how he could deal with it, Soldamyr reacted.

“Push away my enemies! Gust!”

The purple fog turned around and flew towards the enemy. He quickly

“Blink”

Dodged the spell he cast. However,

“Cough Cough”

He began to cough. Sungjin noticed earlier with the Fireball, but as Soldamyr said, the escape mechanism with the Blink was not perfect.

“Then if we attack as three it should end quickly.”

Sungjin called forth Cain as well.

“Woof!”

Sungjin did not wish to waste any more time in this chase. He addressed his two summons.

“Soldamyr, use magic to force his hands. I will go around towards his left, and Cain, chase him from the right. Intentionally move to his right side.”

After his short command, Soldamyr began casting his spell.

“Lance which pierces all!”

When Soldamyr’s spell came flying

“Blink!”

Magician used his spell to escape, but Cain was waiting where he reappeared. Even he could not cast Blink back to back. He swung his staff ‘Cerberus’ to retaliate.

“Woof woof!”

“Arf!”

“Grr!”

The three heads of Cerberus bared their fangs towards Cain, but Cain knocked all three heads aside with a single swipe.

“Whine!”

The heads all cried out in pain at the same time. Lenin lost his grip on the staff and became disarmed. Cain came charging forth. Lenin became frightened and yelled

“Blink!”

And teleported, but it was close to where Sungjin was waiting.

“Got you now!”

Sungjin had intentionally kept his distance while Cain was fighting. Sungjin quickly swung the Moon Specter.

“Ack!”

Lenin was cut in the stomach, but still retaliated with

“Frost Bite!”

However

“Reflect Magic”

Sungjin knocked aside the magic which headed his way with the Artemio, causing it to grab the Magician’s feet instead.

“What... What?!”

Before he could recover from his surprise, Sungjin swung his Moon Specter. His neck was severed in a flash. The Operator gave an announcement.

[Boss ‘Mad Magician’ Lenin Cleared]

Chapter 082 – Magician's Ivory Tower (3)

“Whew”

Sungjin wiped away the sweat from his brows. It was a short, but intense battle.

‘Blinking everywhere with spells... Sigh...’

It took much longer than expected. In order to use all five marbles, he had to finish things as quickly as possible. Sungjin made his way down the stairs.

‘If this is the tenth floor... the hidden pieces were located... ’

Sungjin tried to remember the past. As he made his way up while fighting the mobs, he came across a secret door. Contained within was a magician's hat; a hat which granted temporary status boost.

‘Was that the 5th floor? Or was it the 6th?’

It was the place where a Manscorpion was, but he couldn't recall as to its exact location. He was too busy trying to survive first time around, where clearing the objective was a difficult challenge in of itself; he didn't have the time to sit around memorizing the location of secret items. Sungjin thought to himself,

‘Well, I should see it as I descend.’

“Let’s go Soldamyr, Cain.”

Sungjin climbed down the stairs with his two summons. The summons lasted 15 minutes thanks to the ‘Summoner’ passive.

It was in his best interest to make his way down the levels while he still had dependable allies. And thus he arrived on the 9th floor. The 9th floor unexpectedly had a large black goat roaming the level. The goat looked innocent enough. But

“Baa~”

When the goat let out a cry, Sungjin felt sleepiness wash over him. Resistance proved futile, and his eyes closed themselves. Sungjin was about to call out Soldamyr’s name who was following behind him

“Soldam...”

He didn’t manage to finish before falling asleep.

“Electronic Touch!”

Soldamyr used electricity to wake him, but the goat was already charging upon him. Sungjin braced his two swords against the goat’s charge, but

‘Pow!’

Cain came flying like a thunderbolt from the side, crashing into the goat’s side and flinging it away.

“Baa~”

The Goat cried as it was pushed away. Cain returned to Sungjin’s side

‘Grr...’

Cain bared his fangs and made threatening growls.

“T..Thanks, Cain.”

Sungjin thanked him as he recalled the past. The goat was no ordinary goat; it could cast magic, a Goat Magician. Probably a creature created by the Mad Magician Lenin. The Goat began to cry again

“Baa~”

A magic circle appeared before the goat. A fireball was fired from the magic circle. It was much smaller than the one fired by Lenin, but it was still quite a size. Sungjin chanted a spell.

“Anti Magic Shield”

The ball of fire flew straight at Sungjin.

“Boom!”

And exploded.

‘What kind of Goat shoots fireballs...’

Regardless of how strange the monster was, he had to beat it quickly. Sungjin charged towards the Goat again. The Goat swung its head around, trying to attack Sungjin with its horns. But that was a mistake.

There was no way it could hope to beat Sungjin in a melee. Sungjin didn’t bother dodging its horns and used the Moon Specter to strike the horn.

‘Crack!’

The horn broke off with a loud snap. The Goat’s prized horns were cut off with a single strike of the sword. The Goat became terrified and

“Baa~”

Cried as it retreated. Sungjin dashed forward to try and finish it off, but

‘Oong’

A bright light enveloped the Goat, and it teleported away a bit to the side. It was the same ‘Blink’ used by its master. Sungjin grinded his teeth.

‘I see... You learned a great trick from your master...’

Sungjin addressed his summons.

“Same tactic as before.”

At his command, Soldamyr began to chant. Cain ran towards the Goat’s right, and Sungjin ran towards the left.

It was the strategy that beat the Goat’s master; there was no way the goat would be able to overcome this.

“Lightning bolt!”

“Baa~”

The goat escaped the trajectory of Soldamyr’s spell, but it ended up moving closer towards Sungjin. Sungjin used the Blood

Vengeance to behead the beast. Swinging the sword, Sungjin removed the blood from the blade. Soldamyr came up to him and said

“This creature... was created to cast magic.”

“Yes, it is impossible for ordinary goats to cast spells otherwise.”

Soldamyr picked up the severed head of the goat.

‘What is he...’

Sungjin was about to ask when Soldamyr whispered

“Mark of ill Omen...”

Sungjin stared at him. On the Goat’s forehead was a red upside down pentagram.

“What’s that?”

Soldamyr explained with a grave expression.

“This... is a forbidden formation.”

“Forbidden? What kind?”

“It’s a taboo spell which... merges two species together.”

“Really?”

“Yes. Just drawing this in Kutan is punishable... execution on the spot...”

Sungjin crossed his arms and said

“The master of this tower is such a nut job. You didn’t see earlier, but he burnt all the buildings down around the tower.”

Sungjin didn’t take it so seriously, but Soldamyr remained grave. Sungjin said to him

“Hey, let’s make our way down. We’re supposed to meet the others halfway.”

Sungjin progressed down the stairs while annihilating monsters on the way.

The difficulty of mobs on each floor rose from bottom to top, so someone like Sungjin who was making his way down from the top found each progressive floor easier than the last.

Sungjin finally reached the 6th floor where the hidden piece was located, guarded by a Manscorpion. The Manscorpion was a strange looking creature.

It had a body of a giant scorpion, like those of Kutan Desert, but had the upper body of a man growing on top. The human part wielded sickles, and although Sungjin wanted to try to speak to it, the Manscorpion wore a metal helm which concealed its face.

“Well, I’ll see after I kill them.”

Sungjin pulled out his swords. Soldamyr informed him

“Master, this is my last spell.”

He had fought all this time without rest, so it was unsurprising.

“Ah, ok.”

Sungjin turned towards Cain

“Cain, go destroy his tail.”

Sungjin made the request and then charged straight ahead.

“Lightning Bolt!”

Soldamyr's spell came flying from behind

‘Bzzzt!’

The Manscorpion who was hit by the spells spazzed out on the spot. Taking advantage of this moment, Sungjin swung his two swords together and cut off both of its claws at the same time.

“Ugh...”

The Manscorpion let out a strange cry of pain as he swung his sickle to retaliate, but Sungjin dodged it by simply tilting his head back. It nearly reached, but it was all calculated. The large tail came bearing down on Sungjin but

‘Grr!’

Cain bit down and held onto the top part of the tail.

‘Haa hoo...’

The Manscorpion continued to let out a strange cry of agony. Sungjin was getting tired of it. He ran up the body of the Scorpion and cut off the wrists of the human portion of the Manscorpion, disarming it.

Then holding the Blood Vengeance upside down, he plunged the sword into the center of its scorpion side, killing it. The tail lost

strength and became limp.

And although the human portion had only lost its hands it still went limp and died.

“Hmm...”

Sungjin considered taking off the helm of the Manscorpion to see his face but decided against it. He didn't think that he would like seeing whatever was hidden underneath. Sungjin turned around.

Soldamyr was already back in his lamp.

‘Taboo spells... it really does leave a sour taste.’

He thought to himself. But then from the stairs leading down to the next floor,

“What do you think happened to him?”

“Why do we need to worry about him at all?”

“But the boss was cleared...”

“Forget it, let's just get ready for the next enemy.”

Voices of others could be heard. The hunters had arrived.

Sungjin went to meet the others along with Cain.

“Yo~ Nice timing.”

Reactions to Sungjin’s appearance were highly varied.

“You...”

The ‘Green Magician’ was speechless.

“Did you kill the boss? Alone?”

‘Mountain’ immediately asked out of curiosity.

“Why did you go alone?”

The Hoplite chastised him. And finally

“You fucking troll! Die!”

The Highlander came charging towards him. Sungjin thought as he watched the man run towards him.

‘This happened last time too...’

Sungjin readied his weapons and parried the Highlander’s two

handed sword. One strike, two strikes, three strikes were exchanged... and this man was strong. Not only was he quick, but his strikes were heavy as well.

Sungjin took on a downward strike head on and was planning on pushing the sword aside.

But when Sungjin tried to push off the sword, the Highlander gave no resistance and instead rotated the sword, using Sungjin's push to help turn.

Because of it, Sungjin was forced to make useless movements. The Highlander used this opportunity to attack Sungjin.

“Wooosh~”

The sword made threatening noises as it came flying towards Sungjin's undefended side. Sungjin hurriedly brought his Blood Vengeance back down to block it

“Clang!”

The man retreated after his attack failed. The Highlander had a rigid expression.

‘He blocked this?’

His eyes seemed to say. But Sungjin was also surprised as well.

The attack just now required ‘his full attention’ to block it.

If he did not have at least double the Dexterity and Strength, he would have fallen prey to the earlier attack.

‘Hey... he’s really good.’

Sungjin just stared at the man. The ‘Highlander’ was a young white male. Blonde, blue eyes, agreeable features, and handsome looks. The ‘Highlander requested assistance from his teammates.

“Hey! What are you doing? Help me!”

But the others remained hesitant. They must have felt uncomfortable attacking another hunter. By now everyone should have become aware of the ‘Troll System’.

They must not want to land the first strike. Sungjin found it interesting. Curious about something, Sungjin decided to test the ‘Trite – Eye of Jeremia’.

Sungjin touched the earring hanging from his right ear. The Earring required a conversation to activate. Sungjin faced the other hunters and said

“I am not a troll. All I did was run ahead.”

And soon he heard everyone’s voices all at once.

‘So the announcement about killing the boss was true?’

‘But isn’t that exactly the same thing as trolling? Well, since he’s not in troll state I shouldn’t attack him first and get the penalty.’

‘If either one of them dies... my contribution percentage should rise. I won’t get in the way and just watch. Things may end up playing in my favor.’

He could hear the sound of their inner voices. It was the most interesting of experience. And of the voices, the one that had the most impact on Sungjin was

‘That mother fucker... shut the fuck up!’

It was the ‘Highlander’s’ rage fueled thoughts. He came charging towards Sungjin once more.

‘Clang!’

The Highlander’s two handed sword exchanged blows with Sungjin’s two blades.

“Hey, why are you doing this?”

“You really don’t know?”

And whisper-like voices could be heard.

‘We almost died because you left the team!’

He didn’t seem like a bad person. Sungjin wanted to explain to him

“Hey, I’m not a troll. It’s just...”

“No excuses!”

The conversation did not last very long. He came charging towards Sungjin with the large sword. And his inner thoughts could be heard.

‘Trolls like you are enemies of mankind! You little piece of shit!’

Sungjin watched him charge in, but couldn’t help but grin.

‘Hey... this guy’s pretty righteous!’

Chapter 083 – Magician's Ivory Tower (4)

‘Clang clang!’

The swords exchanged blows. Sungjin wanted to speak with him more.

“Hey listen to what I have to say”

But the only reply he got was the swinging of the swords. And because either the conversation ended or 10 seconds passed, Trite was no longer active. The only way to interact with the Highlander was

‘Clang! Clang!’

Through the sword. The ‘Highlander’ was filled with rage. Enough to be willing entering the troll state to kill Sungjin.

Actually, Sungjin could have allowed one or two attacks to land to put the Highlander in troll state, kill him, and take two items. But Sungjin decided not to do so.

Sungjin liked him. And also, his reason

‘We almost died because you left the team!’

He was not wrong. The difference between Sungjin and the

Highlander was that the Highlander had not experienced the latter stage of the raid; their knowledge was different, and their perspective was different is all.

‘Willing to sacrifice himself to carry out justice... kind of an idiot but... a man with good intentions.’

Others in the same position as him were thinking

‘Is he telling the truth?’

‘I hope it doesn’t bring harm to me.’

‘This can play to my favor’

And he was also strong. Each time Sungjin blocked a blow, he could tell that the man was unusually skilled with the blade. He was talented with extremely high stats.

‘...Let’s find out more.’

Sungjin held the sword in a cross as he blocked, and pushed away the two handed sword.

“Binding Frost! Frostbite!”

His feet froze in place. He couldn’t run away anymore.

“You fight with the sword, and yet you still use this kind of hex?”

It looks like he had no resistance to magic at all.

‘It’s just like looking at my past self.’

Sungjin thought as he asked

“Hey, you. What’s your name?”

“Why the fuck does that matter?”

It didn’t look like he was willing to share his name.

‘He’s certainly strong enough... And I like his sense of righteousness.

But it wasn’t like Sungjin could use the ‘Holy Water of Baptism’ on someone who didn’t want to receive it.

‘What should I do?’

In the short time Sungjin was considering his options, the spell lost their effectiveness and the Highlander came charging at him immediately. But

‘I saw everything I need.’

Sungjin finally became serious as he used the Moon specter to block the attack and used the Blood Vengeance to knock the two handed sword away.

‘Clang~’

The Highlander was surprised. He had believed he held the upper hand the whole time, but not only had Sungjin parried the attack with just one hand, but was able to knock the sword out of his hand with a strange motion.

The three behind the Highlander were also shocked. They were well aware of the Highlander’s strength, having climbed the tower alongside him. And the Highlander lost so simply.

Sungjin raised his sword to the Highlander’s neck and asked

“I’ll ask again. What’s your name?”

But he glared back at Sungjin and said

“Kill me.”

He was prepared to die. Sungjin watched him for a moment more before putting his swords away.

“I am not a troll, well I am sorry I left you guys behind... I only did that because I had my reasons...”

Explaining his circumstance or persuading others is difficult. The Highlander quickly ran over to his sword and picked it back up.

Even if the fight a moment ago could be called just and passionate, trying to recklessly charge against a foe of insurmountable difference in power is idiocy.

‘If he takes another step...’

But luckily, he walked over to the other hunters after retrieving his sword.

‘Not a bad judgement.’

Sungjin liked him a lot. If not now, Sungjin hoped that he could meet him later on so that he may baptise him.

Sungjin left the other hunters alone and headed towards the stairway to the fifth floor, where the hidden piece was waiting. Cain wordlessly followed. Cain was becoming wiser.

When he felt that the Master was in danger, he would unhesitatingly sacrifice himself to save Sungjin. But even though his master was exchanging blows with strangers, he calmly sat in place.

He must have realized Sungjin was fighting to test the stranger's strength.

‘How smart.’

Sungjin patted Cain's head as he stepped on the first step of the stairway when he realized

‘Ah right... this hidden piece can be used by everyone.’

Sungjin stopped and faced the other hunters to tell them

“Hey, come here for a sec. As an expression of apology...not really but, since there is a hidden piece here, so come get it.”

The hunters were standing in place despite Sungjin's words. They were still being cautious of him.

“Well do whatever you want. There's nothing but corpses upstairs anyway.”

Sungjin climbed down the stairs after he spoke. He now paid attention to the wall of the stairway. The height of the stairs in the tower was standardized between the floors.

With the exception of the stairway leading from 5th floor to the 6th. There were three more stairs between these two floors

compared to any other stairway in the tower. In other words, there was a larger gap between the floors here. And in that gap was a hidden room.

‘I guess you could call it floor 5.5...’

Sungjin checked each of the bricks on his way down.

‘There was something weird here for sure...’

But he ended up reaching the 5th floor. On the floor was a corpse of a beast with a lion’s head and the body of a dog. A liog. When Cain saw it, began to growl.

“Grrr....”

Sungjin glanced at the monster as well. He remembered killing that last time around as well. The forcefully combined dog and lion.

‘...forbidden spell...’

It was a beast he did not want to look at for too long. Sungjin turned around and climbed back up the stairs while rubbing his hands over each of the bricks. Along the way

‘Click’

One of the brick was loose.

‘It’s this’

Sungjin pulled the brick out. It came out without any resistance. Inside was a red button. Then

‘Rumble rumble’

The wall along the stairs opened up. At the same time, the Operator gave an announcement.

[Congratulations!]

[You have found the ‘Hidden Place – Magician’s treasure horde’]

Sungjin entered the room. The light came on automatically and illuminated the entire area within. The room was full of eye-catching treasures.

Between the mountain of golden coins, there were golden crosses, silver cups, gem boxes made out of rubies and sapphire scattered across the room.

An ordinary person would be overwhelmed by such a sight. But Sungjin held no such attachment to gold. If only these coins were

Black Coins, gold was useless.

Sungjin treated these mounds of gold the same as piles of stone as he walked among the treasures. And meanwhile

“What is this?”

He could hear voices from behind.

“Wait... is all of this... gold?”

“Rich! We are rich!”

They shouted in excitement. The others must have followed him down. Sungjin stared at them. Three of them were visibly elated. The ‘Highlander’ wasn’t showing it outright like the others, but his eyes were large. Of them, one acted upon his impulse right away.

The Green Magician ran forward and stuffed a diamond necklace into his cube. Sungjin watched with narrowed eyes.

‘Why are you doing that...’

But when he put the necklace into the cube, the bottom of the cube opened up and let it drop out.

‘You can’t even take it back with you...’

He already tried it once. Any item not ‘owned’ is discarded by the cube. Sungjin left them alone and continued to walk deeper into the room.

On the far side was an extremely worn out pointy hat of a Magician. It was a stereotypical wizard hat. Sungjin picked it up. And then

“Who are you?”

The hat spoke to him. Sungjin responded without being surprised.

“I am Kei. A Hunter”

“...Hmmm really? You weren’t surprised at all by my appearance. You must be quite a veteran hunter.”

‘A veteran... yes... since this is my second time around...’

The Magic Hat continued to speak

“I don’t know how you came to this tower but... if you can, get out. The master of this tower is becoming more and more deranged. Dangerous things may happen.”

Dangerous things have already ended though.

“I know. If you mean Lenin I already killed him.”

“Kill?”

Sungjin nodded.

“Yeah, I killed him.”

The hat paused for a long time.

“So... he went crazy in the end?”

It asked. Sungjin nodded

“Yes. He had completely lost his mind. In his insanity, he razed the town and began strange experiments in the tower.”

“By experiments... you mean combining different species?”

“Yes.”

“So in the end... so that’s what happened...”

The magic hat’s dialogue changed a lot from before.

‘I think last time he just upped my status a bit... what did I say to get him to do that again?’

While Sungjin was trying to recall the past, the Magic Hat said to him

“Lenin was my friend.”

It was an utterance mixed with regret. Sungjin decided to listen to the hat.

“When he was first assigned to this town, he protected this town from monsters and was well respected. But he changed when he completed his mission and returned to the Capital.”

Now that he thought of it, he remembered these words. But Sungjin still listened to the story quietly.

“His teacher was at the Capital. “Orkin of the Blue Ocean”. A great Magician. But he did not select Lenin as his disciple. He picked an unknown child instead.”

Sungjin felt people approaching from the back. The hunters had arrived and were listening in on the story.

“He had devoted his whole life to his teacher... and at first, he tried to understand the teacher’s choice... But he never overcame

the feeling of rejection and slowly lost his mind. And finally, he crossed the line experimenting with Taboo Magic...”

The hat stopped speaking as if it was struggling with rising emotions.

“I tried to stop him... and ended up like this after losing. Hunter, I thank you for taking care of him on my behalf.”

Sungjin bowed for a moment. ‘Thank you’ was sure to be followed by some sort of reward. The hat continued and said

“As a proof of my gratitude, I will give the rest of my remaining magic power over to you. Do you accept?”

If he thought about this for a second, this dialogue was a bit different from last time. When he had visited the hat last time before he killed Lenin,

‘Take some magic power from me. Please kill my friend Lenin on my behalf.’

Something like this had happened. Well, in either way, reward is reward. Sungjin nodded.

“Well, I’ll take it gratefully.”

The Hat glowed for a moment, and a blue ray of light came down

upon Sungjin. The Operator gave an announcement.

[You have obtained 5000 allocated status points.]

The reward was done with this. Sungjin was about to put down the hat. But the hat asked one more question.

“The ones standing behind you... are they comrades?”

Sungjin looked back. Behind him were ‘Highlander’ and the three others who were watching.

He couldn’t use Trite to read their minds, but their inner thoughts could be heard loud and clear.

‘Please PLEASE say yes’

Chapter 084 – Magician's Ivory Tower (5)

Sungjin looked over the hunters.

Stat points 5000.

At the current level of chapters, it was about the same amount of stat points as getting 30~40% contribution.

It was a large sum, even to Sungjin. To the rest of the hunters, it was an incredible amount. It would be the same or more than receiving double the stat reward for this round.

So the hunters all watched with eyes full of hope and expectations. The 'Highlander' tried to maintain his cool, aloof disposition, but even he could not help but be interested in the free reward.

When Sungjin didn't answer for a moment, the hat repeated itself.

"Those people, are they allies?"

It wasn't for sure, but it seemed like whether or not they get anything from the hat depended on Sungjin's answer.

'What should I do...'

Another moment passed. Then, ‘Highlander’s’ eyes met with Sungjin, and he turned away.

‘Cute.’

Sungjin grinned and said to the hat

“Yes, they are my allies. They worked hard to take down Lenin, so please give them strength as well.”

There was a sudden shift in everyone’s expressions. The hat called them forward.

“Really? Good work everyone. Please come forward one by one.”

Sungjin handed over the hat. And when he looked over to everyone, they thanked him.

‘Thank you’

The ‘Highlander was wearing a hard-to-decypher expression. He was probably confused on whether Sungjin was good or evil.

‘Well... think what you want.’

[You have obtained 5000 unallocated status points.]

He heard the loud announcement from behind. Sungjin left the room, leaving the others behind. He immediately allocated the points.

“Operator, please allocate 1000 points to each of the stats.”

[Applied.]

There is going to be plenty of fighting from this point onward. Meanwhile, Cain came forward.

“Grrr arf”

He gave a short bark. Sungjin could understand Cain’s intentions by now.

“Ah, ok Cain. Good work today. Go rest.”

Cain turned into wooden figurine on the spot. Sungjin picked it up and placed it in the cube. Since he found the hidden place, it was time to find the hidden boss. Sungjin asked the Operator

“Operator, use the Treasure Hunter active. Tell me a hint about where the Hidden Boss is hiding.”

The Operator gave a verse.

[The final magic prepared by the Magician]
[Requires a courageous Lion,
[a wise Goat, a cunning Snake]
[and most of all, an intelligent human.]
[When these ingredients are gathered on the formation]
[A supreme lifeform will be born.]

This time the hint was a little short.

‘Lion, Goat, Snake, Man... and a formation.’

There was a formation that Soldamyr told Sungjin about earlier; the upside down pentagram. A forbidden ‘taboo’ spell.

‘...but that was on the Goat head...’

Sungjin thought

“Swiftpaw.”

He took out the claws and climbed back up to the 9th floor where he fought the goat. And as before, he found the upside down pentagram drawn on its forehead.

“It’s a taboo spell which... merges two species together.”

When Soldamyr was explaining earlier,

‘Really?’

He had listened to it absentmindedly without giving it much importance. Sungjin picked it up and turned it over few times to take a look around the head. There was nothing else of interest; Just the upside down pentagram.

‘Upside down Pentagram... forbidden formation...’

He remembered

‘The Lion Corpse on the roof!’

There was a larger Magic formation drawn on the rooftop there. Sungjin brought the head of the goat up to the 10th floor.

Waiting there was the beheaded lion’s corpse, the magic lay formation below it. It wasn’t clear earlier because of the corpse but upon reexamination

“It is a pentagram...”

The formation described in the hint must be this thing. Sungjin searched his memories.

‘Goat’s Head... Lion’s body is already there... and then the rest?’

The first thing that came to mind was the 5th floor, where the Lion Dog lay dead. Sungjin left behind the goat head on the pentagram and climbed down the stairs once more.

10th floor, 9th, 8th, 7th, 6th, and finally the 5th floor. The Hunters were still in the 5.5th floor, inside the treasure room.

“Wow! Look at this! How much do you think this would sell for? Hundred thousand? Million?”

“10 million?”

“Look at this gigantic diamond. Don’t you think it would sell for at least a million?”

They were unable to break away from avarice, despite knowing it was all in vain. Sungjin only glanced at them as he went to the 5th floor, where the Lion corpse laid.

The body had spear wounds, and a deep cut in the forehead by a large sword. Most likely the work of ‘Hoplite’ and ‘Highlander’. Sungjin checked the corpse.

On the underside of the ear of the lion was a Pentagram.

Sungjin used the Moon Specter to separate the lion's head from the dog's body.

‘So what's left is... the Snake's body and the brain of a human...’

There ought to have been a snake somewhere in the tower.

‘Should I head down first?’

Sungjin was thinking, but he noticed someone looking at him. The ‘Highlander’ and the other hunters were watching him.

They must have noticed him pass by and came to say words of gratitude. The ‘Green Magician’ began.

“Thank you. We were able to obtain a great deal of stat points thanks to you.”

‘Mountain’ added as well.

“Thank you. I didn't think... something like a hidden place would...”

Sungjin disregarded their expressions of gratitude.

“Whatever, did you see any snakes in the tower?”

The ‘Green Magician’ replied

“3rd floor, there is a snake monster on the 3rd floor.”

“Really?”

Sungjin approached them with the newly severed head of a lion. And then he handed it off to the ‘Highlander’. He accepted it without a word of complaint.

Because there was no rejection, he must have felt less cautious towards Sungjin. Sungjin looked at him straight in the eye and said

“If you go and take this to the roof, you’ll find a magic formation. Please take this over there.”

And then

“If you consider that you already received 5000 stat points beforehand, it’s an easy quest, right? Then I’ll leave it to you.”

After saying what he wanted, Sungjin headed down the stairs. Glancing back before leaving the room, he saw the others head towards the roof as he had asked them.

Sungjin passed the 4th floor reaching the 3rd floor. A large corpse lay there with the body of a turtle and the head of a snake.

It was a grotesque monster. Sungjin checked the Snake's body and found the pentagram as expected.

‘Body... right?’

Sungjin cut off the body. Until now, he collected 3 out of 4 ingredients. Now the last one was the ‘intelligence of a human’. Sungjin recalled the Manscorpion's helm.

Sungjin returned to the 6th floor where he had left the helm on, thinking he wouldn't like to see what was underneath. But once it was removed, the face was that of an ordinary teenager.

Sungjin cursed Lenin in his mind as he said

“He really was crazy huh...”

Sungjin checked the body. But no matter where he looked, he didn't find the pentagram.

“Is this... the wrong one?”

When he thought of it, there was a second ‘human’ type monster. The Boss monster, ‘Mad Magician’ Lenin himself.

‘...No way...’

Sungjin returned to the 10th floor. He picked up the corpse of Lenin and checked all around. But he did not find a single red pentagram anywhere.

‘Was there any monster on the 1st or 2nd floor with human parts?’

But no matter how hard he thought, he had no recollection of any other human part in this chapter. The 1st floor should have been a skeleton mixed with a zombie, and the 2nd floor had a winged puma.

‘There should only be those two...’

Sungjin thought as he put down Lenin’s body. As it fell his tongue came out, and on it was a red Pentagram.

‘...My god... his own self...’

He went off the far end. Sungjin left his body alone for now and only brought the snake corpse to the roof.

All of the hunters waiting on the roof turned towards Sungjin at the same time. The ‘Green Magician’ asked first.

“Did you... really kill them all by yourself?”

They would have seen Manscorpion on the 6th floor up to Lenin's corpse on the 10th. Sungjin threw the corpse of the snake on top of the formation and answered.

“Well, they certainly didn't bite their own tongues and suicide, that's for sure.”

‘Mountain’ asked while pointing at the pile.

“What are these for?”

He had never come across hidden pieces until now.

“Wait just a bit longer. I will show you the hidden boss in a second.”

Everyone tensed up at the mention of ‘hidden boss’.

“Well run away if you want. I can pretty much guarantee this boss is going to be fairly difficult.”

The hunters glanced each other and whispered. Sungjin left them behind and returned to the 10th floor. He lifted it up and carried the corpse on his back and brought it up to the roof.

“Last warning. Anyone who wants to run, run away now. You can die here.”

Everyone gulped at his words but did not budge. They had their own determination.

‘...well, at least they can buy time for me to read the Romance of the Three Kingdoms...’

Sungjin said to them

“Well, then let’s work together.”

Finally Sungjin threw the body of Lenin on top of the Pentagon. The Pentagon began to glow brightly. The hunters took their position behind the ‘Mountain’.

Sungjin stood at the very back, taking out the ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’. The Operator gave an announcement.

[Caution! Hidden boss]

[Terrible Chimera has appeared]

But despite the announcement, the creature couldn’t be seen past the incredibly bright pentagram. Opening the Romance of the Three Kingdoms revealed a blank page.

‘So... it’s not yet?’

Meanwhile, a familiar voice rang out from inside of the pillar of light.

“Yes! This is it! The greatest body I’ve always wanted!”

It was the Mad Magician Lenin’s voice. The light disappeared, and a monster, far more grotesque than any other, appeared.

To begin with, the goat head grew out of the side of the Lion’s body. It had the tail of a snake and Lenin’s human torso also grew out from the top.

It was an intimidating appearance. Sungjin quickly opened the ‘Romance of the Three Kingdoms’

‘When Sima Yi pursued him up to the West Castle...’

The book now held content, but when Sungjin tried to read it

“Baa~”

The goat cried. And at the same time, an irrepressible drowsiness took over Sungjin. Meanwhile, Lenin could be heard chanting an incantation.

“Murderous thunder, Jump from foe to foe!”

Even as Sungjin heard Lenin's chant, he was unable to resist the drowsiness. But it was then,

“Power of Lightning!”

The Highlander was gathering the power of electricity into his two-handed sword.

‘What is that?’

But Sungjin lost his consciousness.

Chapter 085 – Magician's Ivory Tower (6)

Lenin, who was growing out of the center of the 'Chimera' body, fired a lightning bolt out of his hands. The Highlander lifted his sword high and shouted

“Electro!”

The bolts of lightning that left Lenin's hands were pulled into and absorbed by the Highlander's Two handed sword. The Highlander immediately charged towards Lenin whose body was situated at the center of the Chimera.

But that was no easy task since the rest of the Chimera was defending it.

‘Woosh’

The Highlander had to defend against the Lion's front paws. The Mountain and Hoplite ran in to assist, but they also had to contend with the Snake forming the tail.

While a fierce fight broke out, the 'Green Magician' placed his hands on Sungjin's forehead and chanted

“The morning has come, Awakening.”

Sungjin's eyes soon opened. As soon as he was awake, he checked

his surroundings. The Chimera was busy fighting off three hunters. The only one to fall asleep was him.

It was not an area of effect spell. But

“Baa~”

The Goat cried again. This time the Mountain fell asleep. Since the Tank was no longer in combat, the other two men were suddenly in peril.

The Lion and the Snake attacked the remaining two men; the Hoplite and the Highlander.

The Hoplite was able to ward off the Lion’s claws with his shield and spear, but the Highlander was unable to defend against the Snake due to being preoccupied with defending against the Lion. He was bit in the shoulder.

“Ugh!”

There was no time to nonchalantly read the book. Sungjin closed the Romance of the Three Kingdoms and dashed forward to help the two men. He warded off the Snake with the Moon Specter and cut off the claws of the Lion.

“Kah! You!”

Lenin seemed to recognize Sungjin. Sungjin replied

“I’ll kill you the second time!”

But it wasn’t as easy as he had said. Despite the fact that four independent creatures were mixed into the Chimera, they moved as one living being. The Lion was clawing with its paws, the Snake continued to look for a chance to strike, and the Goat and Lenin used magic attacks.

“Baa~”

“Unextinguishable inferno of hell!”

Everyone was in danger. Sungjin moved quickly to seal the Chimera’s movements.

“Snake eye”

The eye of Basilisk opened from his necklace, and the Chimera froze up in place as a whole. Sungjin held his sword in a cross and slashed against the Lion’s face in an X shape. The Lion lost both eyes at the same time.

“Kragh!”

A wild beast cried out in agony. The Chimera flinched. Sungjin moved to strike again. But

“Baa~”

The Goat cried once more, and the Chimera flew up into the air.

‘Damn it... I have to use my spells...’

Sungjin looked up at it and

“Pa!”

Fired the Blood Vengeance, but the Lion knocked it out of the air with its paws. The Lion had lost his eyes but seemed to be able to see due to other sources of sight.

“Haa!”

Sungjin readied his Moon Specter. But

“Close the wounds and erase the pain, Heal!”

Lenin cast healing magic while floating up in the sky.

‘Unfair...’

The bosses until now were specialized towards either magic or

physical attacks, but this Chimera was good at both; a jack of all trades.

The Lion and the Snake were the warrior type, while the goat and Lenin were the Magician type. A similar creature to Pach and Cho'Roch, where the individual parts worked in harmony to support one another and became stronger as a whole compared to the constituents.

While watching the Chimera heal itself in the air, the Mountain and the Hoplite chanted

“Lance which pierces all! Lightning Bolt!”

“Steel-cutting Blades of Wind! Wind Cutter!”

And sent spells flying towards the boss. However, the size of the lightning bolt or the wind blade was small. Their Magic power was far less than Sungjin's.

Seeing that, Sungjin thought

‘There's no way that will do any damage...’

And as expected

“Baa~”

The goat cry generated an ‘anti magic shield’, protecting the boss from harm. Of the spells the Hunters were using the one that proved most effective was

“Counteract the Poison and return to nature, Neutralization!”

The spell the ‘Green Magician’ used on the Hoplite. It was a recovery magic Sungjin also knew of. Followed by

“Nature’s power of healing, Regeneration!”

He followed it up with healing magic. According to Soldamyr’s explanation, it was a little different than the White Magic ‘Heal’ in mechanism but it had similar effects.

“Thank you”

The Highlander expressed his gratitude towards the Green Magician. Sungjin put away the Blood Vengeance and equipped the Artemio for the Magic Reflect.

‘Aim for a well-timed counter attack.’

But once the Chimera was done healing, it climbed higher up in the air. Sungjin thought while looking up

‘...What is he doing?’

Until now, Sungjin had never seen the boss escape from the fight. But Sungjin shortly realized the enemy's intentions.

The Chimera climbed high into the sky and suddenly plummeted down at high speeds.

The Mountain who had been readying his shield for defense realized that it was not an attack that should be taken head on.

“D...Dodge it!”

The hunters scattered chaotically.

“BOOOM!”

With a deafening noise, the Chimera landed on the top. But the tower began to collapse due to the impact.

‘Rumble rumble’

“Eh?”

The floor collapsed, and everyone including the Chimera were forced into the 10th floor. They couldn't see due to dust and were put off balance.

“Kragh!”

The fully healed Lion came charging towards the hunters. The target was the Hoplite who was isolated from the rest. Before anyone could do anything to stop it, the Lion ripped off his entire arm.

“K...”

The Snake took that time to grab him and throw him off of the tower. The Hoplite sailed through the air as he plummeted down.

“Edwin!”

The Highlander shouted out his real name, but his fate was sealed.

“You Bastard!”

The Mountain and Highlander charged towards the Chimera out of anger. Sungjin joined them in the charge.

While the Mountain suppressed the Lion’s paws, the Highlander stabbed the Lion’s arm and cut off the tongue of the Snake. They were a good duo. While the two of them were facing off against the Lion and the Snake

Sungjin ran to the left. The target was the Goat. It had an incredibly short chant of ‘Baa~’ and showed nearly as high magic

power as Lenin. Number 1 priority for elimination.

But because it died once to Sungjin's hands, as soon as it noticed Sungjin charging at it, the whole Chimera jumped back in response. At the same time, Lenin chanted a spell.

“Incinerate everything in your path!”

It was like as if he was using ‘substitute casting’ all by himself. Shortly afterwards

“Baa~”

A ball of fire appeared at the Goat's Mouth. The two of them must have planned to cast the same spell at the same time. The hunters other than Sungjin were panicked by the sight and scurried off to hide behind the rubble.

But Sungjin thought

‘This is my chance.’

Gripping Artemio tightly, he ran.

“Reflect Magic!”

Artemio glowed purple. At the same time, he thought to himself

‘Anti Magic Shield’ and Besgoro chanted on his behalf.

“Spell-devouring magic field, Anti Magic Shield”

“Fire Ball!”

The balls of fire left Lenin’s hand and the Goat’s mouth at the same time. Sungjin readied the Artemio and swung his sword like a batter in a baseball game.

‘Bing~’

Artemio’s purple blade clashed against the fireball and reflected the attack back towards the Goat

“Kaboom!”

It made a massive explosion. The embers flew all over, but Sungjin was safe since he was protected by the ‘Anti Magic Shield’.

The Chimera, whether it was the Human Goat Lion or Snake, was unable to immediately recover from the blast. But even this wouldn’t last very long.

Sungjin decided to go all in.

“Frenzy”

The eyes of Besgoro began to glow bright red, and the sword of Sungjin moved even faster than before, speeding up as he began to cut up the Chimera.

The Lion's head was severed, the Snake was cut down the middle, and the Goat was pierced through the head with the Sword. Due to his immense speed, the Chimera was unable to react and could only flinch.

Only Lenin could act in response.

“Defy Gravity!”

He was trying to use ‘Flight’ to escape into the air again, but Sungjin had already prepared by sheathing the Moon Specter; He didn't hesitate to pull the trigger.

“Ghastly Wail”

The wail was activated.

“KYAAAH!”

Because of the Wail

“Fl...u...aahhhh!”

Lenin began to scream. The incantation failed to activate. Lenin trembled in fear and put up his hands in submission

“Mercy. Forgive me.”

Lenin was typically out of his mind, but now that he was scared it seemed as if he was back to normal. Sungjin was going to take his time to finish off Lenin, but the main body of the Lion became a problem.

When Sungjin moved closer to the Chimera, the Lion’s body automatically ran backwards to escape.

The problem was that behind him was empty air; the outside of the tower. The Lion ran away scared out of its wits and flung itself out of the tower.

“Eh...?”

Sungjin was about to run over to the edge and chase after the Chimera but

“Boom”

A loud crash was heard from below, and the Operator gave an announcement.

[Congratulations. Hidden Boss]

[Terrible Chimera is Cleared.]

Sungjin still walked over to the edge to look down the side of the tower. The four creatures were in a bloody heap where it became impossible to tell which part corresponded with what animal.

The enemy this time was no easy foe. It was cleared thanks to the help of the other hunters, but if he had fought this one on one, it would have dragged on for quite a while.

And in the process, the Hoplite had lost his life. The raid is designed to be just barely beatable when investing every coin and status points one could get their hands on.

For several chapters Sungjin focused on buying marbles rather than using his coins and stat points to empower himself; it was slowly making these fights more and more difficult.

‘Next time I won’t think about how to get more coins and just buy the item from Darker than black.’

Sungjin wrapped up his thoughts and turned around. He could see the ‘Highlander’. The White man who had carefully observed Sungjin’s actions. He was silent. He must be mourning for the Hoplite.

“Damn it... If only I was stronger...”

Sungjin couldn't help but think

‘Really... he is just like my past self...’

Sungjin had been the same. Whenever a teammate would die, he would become depressed as if it was his fault. Enough to affect the next raid.

But after experiencing this dozens of times, he had become desensitized to the feeling. Sungjin walked over and placed his hand on his shoulder.

“It is not your fault.”

The Highlander looked up to stare Sungjin in the face. It didn't look like he distrusted Sungjin any longer. But he soon let his head drop. As he hung his head, a tear drop fell down his cheeks.

It was an entirely different image compared to when he was fighting Sungjin earlier. Seeing him like this, Sungjin thought

‘Strong... and incredibly humane... Should I baptise him?’

It was a dilemma.

Chapter 086 – Magician's Ivory Tower (7)

Sungjin watched the Highlander. For one reason or another, he reminded Sungjin of his earlier days. Sungjin took out 'Jasepit – Holy Water of Baptism' from his vest.

The holy water splashed around inside. It looked the same as when he had first obtained it two raids ago. Sungjin was becoming increasingly curious as to its effects. What did the title of 'Chosen One' do?

The reason why Sungjin continued to hesitate was because obtaining 'White Coin' was a difficult task.

When it came to Black Coins, he could try harder and get more (with 5 Trollseeker Marbles, he could earn several more times the coins earned by others), but he couldn't do the same with 'White Coins'.

White coins obtained from 'Reign' required sincere submission, so it wasn't something he could earn just by putting in more effort.

'It isn't something I can afford to use recklessly...'

[All monsters eliminated.]

[Beginning Raid Distribution]

‘Eh...’

Now that she mentioned it, this chapter was an ‘Ivory Tower’. A tower where ordinary monsters had no hiding place. The Hidden boss was the last enemy remaining.

[Monsters Slain. Halfdead body: 1. ... Manscorpion: 1. Magic Mountain Goat: 1.Total 10,000 [Points](#).]
[Boss Monster ‘Mad Magician’ Lenin 1300 points.]
[Hidden Boss Terrible Chimera 1300 Points.]
[Combined Total 12600 Points. Distributing points.]

The reward began with the ‘Mountain’.

The author dosent provide the number of monsters killed in the distribution in this raid and instead uses ‘...’

[Your Contribution is 12.4%]

Next was ‘Green Magician’.

[Your Contribution is 13.1%]

Followed by ‘Highlander’.

[Your Contribution is 21.7%.]

It was high as expected. A high value among elite hunters. Sungjin could guess what happened until they reached the 6th floor. Of course, it couldn't hold a candle to what Sungjin was about to receive.

[Your Contribution is 52.8%. Stat points 6653 points Black coins 6653 points.]

[Raid Clear Bonus 2500 Stat points and 2500 Black Coins awarded.]

[Item effect ‘Additional 10% gained’ activated.]

[Distributing 9153 Stat points and 10068 Black Coins.]

[And now we will distribute the items.]

Everyone was busy accepting items from the raid reward. It was probably the most anticipated moment in the raid. Sungjin patiently awaited his turn. And soon the Operator distributed Sungjin's share.

[Chimerao – Ring of Fused Beasts]

[Merka – Pulp of Evolution]

[Enhancement Stone]

Sungjin obtained 3 items in total. If something had to be pointed out...

[Congratulations! Legendary Item 'Chimerao – Ring of Fused Beasts']

[Legendary Crafting Material 'Merka – Pulp of Evolution]

[Legendary Crafting Material 'Enhancement Stone' obtained.]

All three were legendary items or crafting materials. This suited Sungjin just fine since a wishy-washy heroic class item would only end up in the Auction house.

Sungjin picked up the items he received this round. The first was the ring. 'Chimerao – Ring of the Fused Beasts'. Around the round Diamond centerpiece, four animals 'Lion, Snake, Human, Goat' decorated the ring.

Sungjin put it away for now. Next was the item 'Merka – Pulp of Evolution'. This item was also very strange. It was a type of fruit with a light green color similar to that of a melon.

On the surface was a cloud shaped pattern. Sungjin picked up the item and sniffed it.

“Ugh...”

The smell was too strange. It couldn't possibly inspire appetite.

‘Where am I supposed to use this...?’

He wouldn't be able to find out more until he checked the Operator's Information page. Sungjin placed this item into the cube as well. The last item was the 'Enhancement Stone'. An item which enhances another item.

‘I already got three... I should visit the smithy soon...’

There were many places for him to spend Black Coins.

[Last but not the least, you will be awarded titles you've earned on this raid.]

Sungjin didn't have high expectations of titles anymore.

Thanks to his near perfect playthrough thus far, he had already obtained all the important titles such as 'Master Hunter', 'Elite Samurai', 'Adjudicator', 'Treasure Hunter' and the like.

‘Well.. It should still be useful...’

But

[Iron Will – Auto protects twice against abnormal status such as ‘Sleep, Confusion, petrification, and blind’.]

‘Ohh...’

It was quite a good title this time. It was a title many tanks used in the past.

‘Is it because I was forced to sleep twice...?’

It was a good title nonetheless. He didn’t feel the need to keep it active at all times, but if it could automatically block a single status effect, it would make fighting much easier.

After the distribution was complete,

[You have reached 100% completion. Returning to Hunter’s Hall in 1 minute.]

Sungjin said to the Operator

“Hey wait... I don’t want to be summoned back this moment. Is

that possible?”

[It is possible.]

“Then send me back at the time-over.”

The Operator changed her words at his request.

[Understood. Returning to the Hunter’s Hall in 57 minutes and 14 Seconds.]

The Operator informed everyone of the remaining time.

‘...57 Minutes...’

The schedule was tight. Sungjin had a total of 5 Trollseeker Marbles.

It was not a large map by any stretch, but there was no telling what could happen so Sungjin had to hurry.

But before he could transfer dimensions, he had unfinished business to take care of; The baptism of the Highlander. Despite receiving his raid reward, the Highlander remained depressed.

Sungjin stared at him.

‘What should I do...’

But there was no time to be hesitating. Sungjin made a decision.

‘Yeah, I need to find out what this does anyway. I’ll just go ahead and use it since I have another one on standby. I should be able to get a White coin one way or another...’

Sungjin approached him.

“Hey, what’s your name?”

This was the 3rd time he had asked. If he wouldn’t respond this time, Sungjin was prepared to give up on him. No matter how just, no matter how skilled, Sungjin had no reason to forcefully create a relationship with a man who disliked him.

But the Highlander looked up and told Sungjin his name.

“Franz. Franz Hosenfeld.”

After sharing Hidden place Bonus stats and overcoming the Chimera, he had no longer suspected Sungjin. Sungjin took out the ‘Holy water of Baptism’ and said

“Ok, Franz. I will Baptise you...”

Franz gazed up at Sungjin.

“Oh and I have no idea what this actually does. But... Go ahead and get baptised. It’s probably nothing harmful.”

Franz tilted his head at Sungjin’s words.

“What do you mean?”

He didn’t have time to explain everything. Sungjin hesitated for a second before repeating himself.

“It’s not going to harm you... probably.”

Franz must have realized something was odd and tried to get up, but Sungjin did not wait for him. He decided he was going to baptise him by any means, even by force if need be.

Sungjin opened the lid to the glass vial and poured the holy water over his head.

“Baptism”

Bright light left Sungjin’s body and flooded towards Franz. Franz lifted up his hands and said

“What is this?”

He asked, but Sungjin had no answer. He knew nothing about this process. The remaining two hunters watched this strange sight as well.

One giving, one receiving, and two watching; the four men were silently watching for about 10 seconds. Then the light began to dim and ebb.

And once the light ended, the Highlander’s cube made an announcement.

[You were ‘Chosen’ by someone. Title granted.]

[Chosen one – [Receive 20% of the chooser’s stat as bonus stat.](#) Once a day, you may summon the Chooser with his permission.]

For anyone wondering about the whole 20% point thing whether it will affect K, the Chosen One is a title so K does not lose 20% of his stats. Like Master Hunter title where his stats increase by 30% similarly on equipping the Chosen One the person’s stats increases by 20% of the chooser’s stats.

“WHAT?”

Everyone on the spot shouted out in surprise. Sungjin was no exception.

“I can’t believe this... You’re going to get 20% of my stats as bonus?”

Sungjin had about double or triple the stat of others. Receiving 20% of stats from Sungjin would likely give him more bonus stat than having ‘Master Hunter’ title equipped for the Highlander.

Highlander was also surprised.

“20%? Operator, show me my stats.”

Title: Highlander

HP: 52320 MP: 6100

Strength: 6407 5216 (+1191)

Dexterity: 6974 5715 (+1259)

Endurance: 5232 4500 (+732)

Magic Power: 525 13 (+512)

Mind Power: 910 11 (+899)

Unallocated Status points: 1650

The Highlander was shocked after checking his stats again.

“WHAT”

Every stat had risen by an enormous amount. Strength, Dexterity and Endurance, even the stats he had ignored such as Magic Power and Mind Power had risen by a considerable amount.

The hunters watching were also surprised. The ‘Green Magician’ looked back and forth between Sungjin and the status screen as he said

“Wait, if this is 20%... your stat... it’s so high!”

He must have calculated Sungjin’s stat points based on the bonus amount. But the Highlander said

“No... this is not 20%. The ‘Chosen One’ title isn’t Active.”

The other two hunters were even more surprised. The bonus showing up on the status screen was not 20% since the title was not active; the bonus represented just 10% of Sungjin’s stats.

“Wait so 10%?! All of that is just 10%?”

The calculation became even simpler. The ‘Green Magician’ and the ‘Mountain’ looked at him in surprise. Multiplying Highlander’s bonus stats by 10 gave Sungjin’s ‘Basic Stats’.

“My god...”

“That’s incredible!”

They couldn’t help but be astonished. Sungjin had three times or even four times more stat points than others. And that was even with the ‘Master Hunter’ deactivated. The Highlander looked at him with respect.

“So you really did... go easy on me earlier.”

Sungjin silently nodded. The Highlander could tell with just the stats that if Sungjin had wanted, he would have died in just seconds.

He didn’t understand Sungjin’s circumstance, but Sungjin had enough strength to be acting alone, and more. The Highlander gazed at Sungjin a bit longer before bowing his head and apologizing.

“I am sorry for attacking out of nowhere.”

Sungjin replied

“No, no. In fact, the reason why I decided to baptise you was because you attacked me.”

The Highlander lifted his head back up.

“What?”

He looked at Sungjin with puzzled looks. But Sungjin was telling the truth. If the Highlander had thought

‘It’s none of my business’

‘There’s no reason for me to attack if it’s disadvantageous for me’

Like the others, Sungjin wouldn’t have wanted to baptise him. Sungjin replied

“I told you earlier... even if you can’t understand all of it... there’s a reason for it all. If you want an explanation, I could give one but...”

Sungjin glanced at the cube. The ‘Chosen One’ Title was unexpected, but it was time to leave for Troll hunting. He didn’t have any time left. Sungjin asked him

“In the explanation for the Chosen One title... it said you could summon the chooser... which is to say me, right?”

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Highlander Franz nodded at Sungjin's question.

“Yes... It most definitely said I could summon the chooser once a day...”

“So when the raid is over, go to the Black market. Once you activate the title, call for me. We can continue talking there. I'll let you know about what's going on.”

He tilted his head.

“But... Couldn't you just tell me now? We have 50 minutes left...”

Sungjin shook his head.

“It is BECAUSE there are only 50 minutes left.”

“Excuse me?”

Sungjin frowned.

“Look, it will take a while for me to explain so let's talk when we meet at the Black Market, okay?”

He still looked confused, but

“... Ok.”

He nodded for now. Sungjin took out the ‘Trollseeker Marble’ from his vest. This was the 10th floor where the Raid boss was. In other words, the perfect place to begin the search for Trolls. Sungjin immediately

‘Pursuit of Justice’

Wanted to use it, but he was interrupted by the ‘Green Magician’ and the ‘Mountain’.

“Excuse me... Adjudicator... Please choose me as well!”

“Me too... I need stats. Please baptise me!”

Sungjin looked at them. What a difficult situation. He only had one bottle left. He couldn’t use it on just anyone. Sungjin said to them

“I am sorry, but I can’t do this for everyone.”

They looked very disappointed.

“I am sorry.”

Sungjin was about to leave them, but once more

“Please reconsider.”

“I’ll... I’ll do anything.”

When they held on to him, he got an idea.

“Then... I’ll make a proposal. It is a difficult proposal...”

“What is it?”

Sungjin showed them the spiral pattern Ring on his left ring finger; the ‘Ring of Helrick’

“If you kiss this ring with a genuine and sincere submission towards me...”

Before he could even finish his sentence

“I’ll... I’ll do it.”

“Me too.”

They answered without hesitation. But the explanation was not over.

“I will baptise you when we meet again.”

This is what Sungjin thought. If the Holy water of Baptism cost 1 White coins each, there was no reason why he wouldn't baptise them if they gave Sungjin the White Coin now.

‘They don't seem to be bad people per se...’

But the ‘Green Magician’ felt suspicion.

“Next... time?”

“Yes, next time.”

The Mountain also tilted his head.

“When would that be...?”

Sungjin shrugged.

“I don't know the answer to that. But, if you can continue to survive, we will eventually meet, don't you think?”

Sungjin did not tell them about the ‘Power to go between dimensions’. They silently looked at each other.

“Then... We’ll go ahead and do it for now.”

“Me too.”

But there was one last hurdle to overcome.

“But if you kiss this ring, you’ll receive a permanent 10% reduction in coins received from Raid Rewards. Are you sure about this?”

“What?!”

“Excuse me?”

An expected reaction.

“No way...”

“He’s right! What are we supposed to do with 10% less coins? How are we supposed to survive the upcoming chapters?”

“That’s why I said it is a difficult proposition. But I can’t help it... This baptism is not something I can do without compensation.”

They fell silent. Sungjin said to them

“Then I’ll just take it that no one wanted to do it... I’ll excuse

myself now.”

Sungjin prepared to leave. They wasted his time. But, Green Magician tried one more time.

“But... if so, why did you baptise the Highlander?”

‘I read his mind, and he was a good guy.’

He couldn’t say this. Sungjin gave a simpler answer.

“I liked his skill.”

At his words, the Green Magician closed his mouth. Using skill as an excuse, the Green Magician was unable to respond. Sungjin gazed at him as he said

“Pursuit of Justice”

And used the Trollseeker Marble.

[Dimensional Transfer Requested.]

A pillar of light came down upon Sungjin.

The Highlander and the others were shocked by what was happening. No surprise as this was probably their first time seeing it.

Usually, a message of ‘You must first receive your raid reward’ should have appeared, but this time he was already past the raid distribution.

[Request for Dimensional Transfer accepted.]

[Teleporting to the requested dimension in 10 seconds. 10, 9]

“What is this?”

The Green Magician, Mountain, and even the Highlander Franz came to touch the pillar of light which surrounded Sungjin.

But the light was like a thick glass which perfectly isolated the interior from the outside. They couldn’t reach inside.

[4, 3, 2]

Sungjin said to Franz in the last second.

“I’ll see you at the Black Market in a bit, friend.”

Franz nodded.

“Yes.”

Soon

[1, 0]

Sungjin was teleported; To the Dimension where trolls awaited him.

‘Woosh’

‘Shhew’

Two swords came at the same time. The ‘Overlord’ watched the path of the sword carefully and aimed to block both of them with his metallic shield.

But when he moved to defend, the red one of the two swords suddenly changed directions. An impossible movement. The Overlord opened his eyes wide.

‘How?!’

But it was already too late. The red sword cut deep into his undefended side.

“Ahh!”

The Overlord cried out in pain. He had never experienced such pain while fighting monsters, but the enemy before him, the ‘Adjudicator’ was too powerful.

With eyes filled with fear, he looked upon the ‘Adjudicator

“Please... Mercy! I’m sorry!”

He tried begging

“Just go take a rest in the purgatory.”

The ‘Adjudicator’ showed no mercy.

“Gragh!”

The Overlord’s head flew away while still inside of his favored helm as he was beheaded.

“Whew...”

The Adjudicator Sungjin immediately asked the Operator

“Operator, Time spent in this Dimension?”

[3 minutes and 12 seconds.]

Besgoro said

‘This was the fastest yet. A new record.’

It was his fourth dimensional jump after separating from the Highlander. He had beheaded four Trolls thus far.

“You’re right. It was because he was right next to where I was summoned...”

When Sungjin arrived, only the troll Overlord was left remaining. Despite having murdered a teammate, the Overlord was leisurely smoking a cigarette. So he was caught by Sungjin and lost his head.

Next to the corpse of the Overlord was the corpse of Lenin and the other Hunters. Sungjin glanced at them.

‘Two burnt to death, one frozen to death, one beaten to death...

and the one I killed.'

Looking at their cause of death, it was easy to guess what had happened here. They just barely overcame the boss with two survivors when the Overlord decided to betray his comrade.

'Blinded by greed of monopoly'

Their party had the worst of luck. But what could they do apart from blaming their fates? Then

'Well that's all good and all, but why are there only one each?'

Besgoro mumbled.

"Trolls you mean?"

'Yes.'

"I know what you mean."

Yes, in the previous raids, he had run into multiple trolls on several occasions. But this time there was only one Troll per jump.

"Well, it's a good thing there aren't many trolls though."

'But two trolls is double, and three trolls is triple the rewards.'

He was right. Sungjin walked over to pick up the items dropped by killing the Overlord. He thought as he placed the items into the cube.

‘Still, I can’t believe there was only one troll per raid... my estimated income... is lower than I thought.’

Not only Black Coins, but he also didn’t even have an opportunity to earn White Coins either. There were one or two hunters who were saved by Sungjin.

‘Thank you’

‘Thank you’

They had expressed their gratitude. But they didn’t do any more than that. Sungjin had tried his best to convince them

‘Hey did you guys manage to find the hidden piece?’

And even took them to the hidden location to give them 5000 stat points

‘But losing 10% in raid rewards is a bit...’

They refused to kiss the ring. The penalty was too large. Besgoro continued to complain.

‘How unfortunate that you can only receive raid reward once.’

Sungjin responded indifferently

“Yeah”

When he led the hunters to the hidden place after saving them, the magic hat said

‘Who are you’

‘Kei, Hunter. I just returned from killing Lenin.’

‘Lenin? You killed Lenin?’

He had acted as if he had never seen Sungjin before.

‘Then as a reward, I will give you my power.’

Although the event was the same, Sungjin did not receive anything in return.

It was just as the merchant in Darker than Black had said. ‘Reward distribution happens only once’. This also applied to hidden places.

“Well, I can’t help it. I guess I’ll just have to focus on beating up the trolls.”

‘Well yes... That’s certainly your specialization.’

Sungjin took a big stretch. There were no hunters left alive, so he had plenty of time.

‘Hmm, I guess I’ll check out my items now.’

The items he had received from troll hunting were no good, but the ones he had received from the reward distribution, the legendary class items, were good.

“Operator, give me the items I got from the distribution earlier. Not the Enhancement Stone though. There’s two.”

A ring and a smelly fruit came out of the Operator’s Cube. Sungjin picked up the Ring.

Chimerao – Ring of Fused Beasts

Legendary Ring

Active Skill

Magician’s Ice (IV) – Immune to Fire for 5 seconds.

Snake’s Serum (IV) – Immune to Poison for 5 seconds.

Lion's Courage (IV) – Immune to Fear for 5 seconds.

Goat's Fire (IV) – Immune to Ice for 5 seconds.

Shared Cooldown of 10 minutes.

Nature is designed by God. The ones who break the design
Will face suitable punishment.

It was good. The abilities were as expected of a legendary class item.

Sungjin had an immense physical advantage, but status effect spells often gave him a headache. With the spells he learned from the last round and with the title of 'Iron Will' he earned this time, he should be able to swing his sword without rest.

“Equip”

Sungjin put it on immediately. Now Sungjin's fingers were getting full of rings. Only a few more fingers to go.

‘About time I need to start picking and choosing.’

Sungjin thought as he looked over to the smelly fruit lying next to him.

Legendary Fruit

Passive

Rapid Growth (I)

Allows Spiritual Linked summons to undergo rapid growth.

If the creature reaches a 'checkpoint', it immediately evolves the creature.

A fruit that grows in a country to the south.

It speeds up bodily function and rapidly increases growth.

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Evolution... Evolution eh?’

Sungjin was staring at the fruit when Besgoro made a comment.

‘So you can give it to the Wolf... or that baby Griffin.’

“I guess so.”

Sungjin inspected the fruit for a bit longer before returning it to the cube. It wasn't something meant for him to eat.

“Operator, how long has it been since we arrived?”

[4 minutes 55 seconds.]

There was still 5 minutes remaining.

“Yeah? Then give me some items the trolls dropped.”

A pile of weapons came flooding out of the cube at his command. A total of 8. Sungjin picked them up one by one, determining their auction prices.

He couldn't have possibly guessed that he would run into an old teammate in the next Dimensional jump.

“Hey... what's the point of this?”

At the 5th floor of the tower, the 'Elite Samurai' asked while severing the head of the lion. The 'Owl Hunter' replied.

“Well... it's an ingredient to unlock the hidden boss.”

The 'Owl Hunter' was holding the snake's head from the 3rd floor.

“Does it really work with shit like these? With severed monster heads? I thought the bosses were hidden on the map somewhere.”

The 'High Level Berserker' replied

“Well... it's different on every map. Some are hiding in human form, other times it's camouflaged into the canyon wall. I've only seen it twice...”

“I see. But how did 'that woman' know how to do this?”

“You heard earlier. Something about Treasure Hunter or whatever. Thanks to her we got bonus 5000 status points after

finding the hidden place.”

“How do you get the Title? I want it as well.”

“If I knew, I would have it already.”

The ‘Elite Samurai’ picked up the Lion’s head as he said

“Ok. Now let’s see how strong Hidden Bosses really are.”

The hunters each carried a head and headed upstairs. But along the way, the ‘Elite Samurai’ asked the Operator

“Operator, what’s my contribution?”

[Your Contribution is 14.4%.]

“What? Only that much?”

The ‘Owl Hunter’ also checked his contribution.

“What about me?”

[Your Contribution is 13.2%]

It was even lower. The Owl Hunter pointed at Elite Samurai and shouted

“What? I did worse than this guy?”

“What? Watch your mouth! How can you say that after seeing my swordsmanship?”

At his words, the Owl Hunter grinned as he replied

“It is because I saw your skill that I say this”

“What?”

The Samurai and Owl Hunter snarled at each other as if they were about to break into a fight.

“Don’t fight. Do you want to become a troll?”

The five hunters all agreed to try hunting the ‘Hidden Boss’ together. If one person were to flag themselves as a troll, the rest wouldn’t let it slide; the troll would just die uselessly.

So the two men stopped arguing to look around. The ‘High Level Berserker’ said

“I checked earlier, and my contribution was on the low 10% as well. The Iron Will on the top floor was the same. The four of us combined are only 50%. The rest are the woman’s.”

Owl Hunter said

“...Really? I mean I thought that might be possible...”

The Elite Samurai also nodded.

“She’s really strong... if it only wasn’t for her strength...”

He licked his mouth. It was a simple expression, but the other two men thought the same thing. Almost no women survived to this late stage of the Raids.

Even from very early on, they were almost nonexistent. It was the first time the men have seen a woman in a long time. And a very beautiful one at that. Once they arrived at the 9th floor,

“It’s my turn now”

The last person with an empty hand, the ‘High level Berserker’ began to cut off the head of the Goat. But among them, the ‘Elite Samurai’ decided to say

“Hey. Just in case... if we survive the hidden boss...”

The others turned to look back at him.

“How about we steal her contribution points?”

He was suggesting they engage in trolling. The others froze in place for a moment. Samurai continued to explain.

“Her contribution is too high, don’t you think? If this continues as is... we will die later on. And... before we take her points... we could enjoy the moment.

At his suggestion, the men couldn’t respond. The High level Berserker paused from beheading the Goat and said

“But she’s strong. Even if all three of us take her on, we have no guarantee we can come out on top. And we don’t know if ‘Iron Will’ will take our side.”

“Well... let’s watch the situation and see what happens. How’s that?”

The ‘Owl Hunter’ broke his silence and joined in.

“Ok, I’m in.”

The “High Level Berserker’ lifted his axe up high and finally finished cutting off the Goat’s head then replied

“I’m in as well.”

The three men all climbed up to the roof past the 10th floor. At the ceiling was the Tank ‘Iron Will’ holding the corpse of Lenin, and the one who commanded the men, the ‘Treasure Hunter’.

The three men all stared at the ‘Treasure Hunter’ for a moment. Slightly tall, lean build, with a long pair of legs.

On top of it all, the leather armor which failed to completely conceal her ample breasts, flawless skin, and her pale blonde hair...

The three men thought back to their earlier conversation.

‘...and enjoy the moment...’

She pointed at the Pentagonagram with her dagger.

“Here, put it here.”

The men obeyed her command and placed the corpses on top of the pentagram. Soon a bright red pillar of light appeared.

[Warning! Hidden Boss]

[Terrible Chimera has appeared!]

The three hunters glanced at each other when they heard the announcement.

Sungjin spoke while checking the information page.

“This is good enough to receive 4500 Coins right?”

Besgoro was also inspecting the item as well.

‘4800... no, I think you can even go as high as 5000 Coins.’

“5000? It doesn’t look THAT good.”

‘You don’t have anything to lose from raising the price.’

“Ok sure, I’ll try with the higher price. If it doesn’t sell, I can just lower the price at that point. It’s not urgent after all.”

‘Yes.’

Sungjin placed the item into the cube and said

“Operator, how much has time passed since I arrived at this Dimension?”

[9 minutes and 46 Seconds.]

“Really? Ok, it is almost time to leave.”

Sungjin took out the Trollseeker Marbles from his vest. Only one was still glowing. Sungjin picked it out and said out loud

“Pursuit of Justice”

[Dimensional Transfer Requested]

[Dimensional Transfer request granted]

He had gotten used to dimensional transfer by now. After finishing the final dimensional transfer, Sungjin took a look around.

“Hmm?”

Something was odd. There was no corpse of Lenin lying around anywhere. There were evidences of combat, scorches of fire and remnants of ice, but no boss.

“Why...”

Sungjin tilted his head.

‘Boom!’

He could hear a sound coming from above.

‘No way... they went for the Hidden Boss?’

Sungjin quickly climbed the stairs to the roof.

There he saw one of the final 10 survivors from the previous life, the Black Magician.

‘Seeing her here...’

Sungjin thought, but Besgoro interrupted him.

‘It’s a woman! And she has a killer body!’

Sungjin had no time to sit around chatting with Besgoro.

“Die you witch!”

The 'Elite Samurai' and 'High Level Berserker' were ganging up on her.

'She might die'

Besgoro warned Sungjin.

"Probably not."

Sungjin shook his head. Nada chanted a spell.

"What is real is fake and what is fake is real! Illusion!"

Her body split into five. Elite Samurai and the High Level Berserker both cut down one illusion each, but there was something they were not understanding.

Her skill with the dagger was unparalleled. During the fight

"Ahhh!"

The Samurai screamed out in pain. Several of his fingers from the hand he held the sword fell to the floor.

'Oooh... Strong women are my favorite!'

Besgoro said unnecessarily.

“Here! This one is real!”

Samurai yelled. The Berserker stopped facing off against an illusion and turned to run towards the real Nada. This time Sungjin ran in as well. He didn't take action to protect Nada.

It was to make sure he could protect the Trolls from Nada. If she kills the trolls, the number of items he could gain decreases.

Nada dodged the sword and axe acrobatically and waited for a chance to counter-attack, when Sungjin suddenly intervened. All three combatants were shocked at the sudden intruder.

“Oh excuse me”

Sungjin said as he pulled out his sword.

“Ghastly Wail”

“KYAAAAAAAAAH!”

A deafening screech reverberated in the air, and the Elite Samurai and the High Level Berserker turned to run in terror. Sungjin was going to slowly bring them down, but...

Nada who was standing next to him (despite taking the full blunt of the Wail) asked with a completely relaxed voice

“Who are you?”

It appeared that she had an item which nullified fear effects. Sungjin gazed at her. She stared back as if it was their first time meeting.

“Well... There’s really not much to say... Let’s hunt those trolls first.”

Sungjin said before running up to the Samurai.

“Eeee...ack”

Seeing as he had obtained the title of ‘Elite Samurai’, he could have parried at least three or four of Sungjin’s strikes, but he was steeped deeply in fear with several fingers missing.

Sungjin swung his two swords.

‘Clang!’

The Elite Samurai was able to stop the Moon Specter which was coming from above, but he couldn’t respond at all to the Blood Vengeance that came from the side.

‘Splat’

He collapsed to the side with a sickening sound. Sungjin was about to take care of the Berserker as well, but his state was a little strange.

His entire body exuded a crimson aura, and the red glow shining from his eyes did not seem like it was due to fear. Now that Sungjin took a closer look, something was shining on his neck. Something that Sungjin also carried in his pocket.

“Yanhurat...”

Sungjin tensed up as he quickly raised both of his swords up in a stance.

Chapter 089 – Magician's Ivory Tower (10)

The Berserker's body turned red; The eyes became bloodshot and blood colored lights burst forth as if his eyes were on fire. Most likely, Yanhurat was busily shouting

‘Kill! Kill! Kill!’

Into his ears.

‘He's going to power up. Careful Kei.’

Besgoro warned. Sungjin knew to be careful without it. No matter how much of a difference in stats they had, that state was dangerous.

“Binding Frost!”

Timing himself along with Besgoro's chant

“Incinerate everything in your path!”

Sungjin delayed his spell to activate it slightly after Besgoro's spell, in order to use the opportunity when the enemy is held in place to strike with the Fireball. But

“Frostbite”

When Besgoro's spell reached him, a round protective veil appeared and warded off the chilling spell. A prearranged protective magic from an item or title must have triggered.

Even so, there was no reason not to fire the finished spell.

“Fireball!”

A ball of fire formed on the tip of Blood Vengeance and flew towards the Berserker.

“Boom”

The spell landed on the ground and exploded, but the Berserker had already run out of the damage zone. He came charging towards Sungjin at an unbelievable speed. Sungjin followed up with Basilisk's eye

“Snake Eye!”

The Berserker paused for a moment, but a round veil appeared, and the Berserker resumed his charge.

“Immunity?”

It didn't look like he was going to die obediently. Sungjin prepared his swords. The Berserker got within range and began

attacking at random. There was no strategy or technique; He was simply relying on pressuring the opponent with pure strength and speed.

Anyone else would have had difficulty defending against such frenzied attacks, but not Sungjin. He patiently and calmly blocked each swing of the Berserker's Axe with his two swords.

‘Clang Clang Clang chingchingching’

Dozens of blows were exchanged in a matter of seconds. He was stronger than any other hunter Sungjin had faced until now; his attacks were on par with Calian from the previous chapter.

But the difference between the Berserker and Calian was that the Berserker only had 30 seconds to make his move. Once the 30 seconds were over, Sungjin would automatically win. And only focusing on defense was easy enough.

The only reason why Calian's fight was difficult because he had to find the timing to counter attack.

‘Clang clang clang!’

Just defending was enough to win. And it wasn't as if the Berserker would do anything other than attack while under the zealot state. He could only continue to swing his weapon.

It was a matter of time until the Berserker was killed by Sungjin's

blade. But another problem popped up.

“Awaken and become my slave!”

Sungjin was facing off against the Berserker when he heard a chant from behind.

“Rise of the Dead!”

And

“Krraagh!”

The Elite Samurai was raised as an undead and joined the fight. It began attacking the Berserker. It was now 2 against 1. The Berserker who was focusing on attack earlier was now outnumbered.

Because the Elite Samurai was someone skilled in life, his reanimated corpse retained some of his abilities and made the combat easier, but Sungjin began to worry.

‘This isn’t good...’

The Berserker’s fate was sealed in stone, but if he were to die at the Samurai’s hands it would be disastrous; no items would drop. Meanwhile, Nada chanted another spell.

“Unholy power, strip the skin and expose the bones. Frenzy!”

Sungjin decided to give it his all as well.

“Frenzy”

Red light burst forth from Besgoro’s eyes and Sungjin aimed for the shoulder and the elbow, where it would be difficult to dodge.

The Berserker was not standing still, so the attacks only grazed him, but that was enough to speed up Sungjin’s attack speed.

Sungjin stabbed the sides and thighs as well. And when his speed increased by three tiers, he beat the Zombie Samurai in beheading the Berserker.

‘Splat’

The Berserker died even before the effects of Yahurat had worn off. Two items fell to the ground.

“Whew...”

Sungjin took a deep breather and then turned around to face Nada. Nada was looking at him with eyes of suspicion.

“What are you?”

The Zombie Samurai was still in a battle stance. It was poised to strike him if Nada commanded. She seemed to be unsure if he was friend or foe.

Sungjin put away his swords to reassure her.

“Ahh, don’t worry.”

But Besgoro was shouting in his head.

“Wow, it’s even bigger up close, Kei!”

He was right. Her chest was overflowing. He tried to ignore him and continue saying

‘I am an ally.’

But

‘Look at those boobs...boobs...’

Because of Besgoro’s distractions, Sungjin became tongue-tied.

“I am boobs.”

“What?”

Nada’s facial expression suddenly changed. She picked up her dagger and was just about to come charging towards him.

‘AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!’

Besgoro began laughing hysterically.

“Damn it!”

‘I am boobs... Boobs!’

Sungjin threw off his helm.

“I am an ally. I am not your enemy.”

But she was already completely on guard against him. The Elite Samurai Zombie looked like it was about to come charging towards him at any minute.

In order to let her feel safe, Sungjin raised his hands up and took several steps back.

“I’m going to tell you again, I am not your enemy, nor am I a Troll.”

Nada’s cube confirmed his story.

[All trolls within the chapter slain.]
[Resuming reward Distribution.]
[Your Contribution is 100%.]
[12600 Stat Points and 12600 Black Coins...]

She monopolized the raid due to her party being wiped out. She had obtained even more points than Sungjin. And Sungjin stayed still while she was receiving her reward.

[Congratulations]
[Chimerao – Ring of Fused Beasts]
[Merka – Pulp of Evolution]
[Cerberos – Gatekeeper of Hell]
[Enhancement Stone]

She received one more item than him. Cerberos, Lenin’s staff.

[Last but not the least, you will be awarded titles you’ve earned on this raid.]

Despite nearing the end of reward distribution, Nada did not lower her guard against him. Sungjin was forced to consider the worst-case scenario (having to fight her).

Seeing her with the ‘Treasure Hunter’ Title, she must have had fought with several hidden bosses and collected several hidden pieces. She would probably be weaker than him, but not by much. Even so, he did not wish to fight her.

Sungjin liked her quite a lot (not as a member of the opposite sex, but as a fellow human being). A Dagger and Black magic user did not inspire an image of a kind human being, but these difficulties only made her stronger. And when interacting with her, she would say

‘I’ll depend on you, Sungjin.’

‘I’ve got your back, Sungjin’

‘Careful, Sungjin.’

She was warmer and kinder than anyone else. In his previous life, she trusted him and had followed his leadership.

‘We’re in the party again. It’s always reassuring to have you in the party.’

But this time around, it looks like everything was going wrong. Sungjin recalled what happened just now like a movie reel.

‘I am boobs’

Sungjin shut his eyes tight.

‘Fuck!’

When he opened his eyes, she glared at him as if he was a rapist. He could understand her feelings. That kind of thing probably occurred to her almost every round. She would have had similar experiences to Serin.

[High Level Black Magician – Increase power of Black Magic by 30%]

[Returning to Hunter’s Hall in 3 minutes 32 seconds.]

‘3 minutes 32 seconds...’

This was the last Troll hunt. The original time over of 1 hour 30 minutes for the chapter must have been coming to a close. Hearing the operator, Sungjin said one more time to her

“I am not an enemy.”

And she replied

“Then what are you?”

Sungjin hesitated, but he decided to tell her the truth. He couldn't afford to lie to his future comrade.

“I am...”

Sungjin glanced up and pointed at his title floating above his head.

“An Adjudicator. I specialize in hunting Trolls.”

At his words, Nada gave an unexpected answer.

“I know. Adjudicator, I have that title as well.”

‘Hmm?’

Now that she said it, it was almost obvious that she would have it. The chances of her running into trolls are much higher than him. Taking that into consideration, he should have expected it.

Sungjin checked behind him. The corpse of the ‘Owl Hunter’ held a bow, and a similar bow lay on the ground close by. She was also trying to hunt trolls for items.

“Well, before that, how did you get here? You weren't here when the raid started.”

Sungjin had to think for a moment.

‘Do I tell her about Darker than Black?’

But telling her about that was a little weird. Sungjin felt that if he were to tell her this, it may cause a change, a change that could become difficult for him to control. So Sungjin decided to give a short answer for now.

“I have an item that allows me to travel between Dimensions. It allows me to intervene in other parties.”

Thankfully

‘Where did you get that?’

She didn’t ask that. She only said

“If you’re done, go ahead and leave.”

She seemed to view Sungjin as a subject of fear. Probably due to seeing him fight the Berserker earlier.

She did not fear having to fight three other hunters in a 3 v 1, but she was on edge after seeing him fight the Berserker. Sungjin said to her

“I can’t leave immediately. And I also have no desire to fight you.”

“How can I know that?”

“You are not a troll. What do I gain from killing you?”

But there is one thing he could gain even without killing her. As he said with his own mouth earlier

‘Boobs’

Nada did not relax her guard against him. Sungjin frowned. It didn’t seem like the situation could be resolved with just a conversation. Sungjin said to her

“Whether or not you trust me, I’ll just go and collect my items. But if you attack me meanwhile, I’ll have to respond.”

Sungjin slowly began to move. Nada was carefully observing Sungjin. She looked like she was about to come attacking him. But she would also not choose to attack Sungjin unless he was a troll.

She was also afraid of becoming a troll herself. Especially against an opponent who professed to be a troll hunting specialist with the title of Adjudicator active.

Sungjin picked up the ‘Elite Samurai’ and ‘High Level

Berserker's' dropped items and placed them into his cube. He couldn't help but think

‘I want to baptise her...’

She was the most dependable and trustworthy companion of the last 10 survivors. She was skilled and a good human being. She was worthy. Her skills would be needed this time as well.

Problem was that she was now completely convinced that he was a pervert.

‘I wish I could use the 9th tier Green Magic to go back in time...’

Meanwhile, the Cube made an announcement.

[Returning to the Hunter's Hall in 1 minute.]

Only one minute left.

‘What should I do?’

Sungjin squeezed his brains for answers.

Chapter 090 – Black Market Ninth Shopping (1)

‘What should I do?’

Sungjin remembered about the ‘Eye of Jeremiah’ on his ear. If he could read her mind, he could possibly find a solution. Sungjin decided to start a conversation.

“What’s your name?”

He touched the earring.

“Why do you need my name?”

He could now hear her thoughts.

‘1 minute until Black Market... I’ll just have to be careful for another minute... then nothing will happen. But... I still haven’t got the chance to grab the item...’

After hearing her thoughts, Sungjin glanced behind her at the bow the Owl Hunter had dropped. It must have troubled her.

What’s the point of hunting trolls if you can’t even pick up their items afterwards? Each Item she took from the Trolls must have been worth more to her than Sungjin, who picked up multiple items from across different dimensions.

Sungjin pointed at the bow next to the ‘Owl Hunter’ and said

“Hey, go ahead and grab your item. It’s a shame if you can’t even collect the Item you got from troll hunting, right?”

‘I don’t think this guy is a troll per se...’

It looked like she had lowered her guard a bit. She slowly moved backwards while watching Sungjin. Sungjin continued to stand still to make sure she can feel safer.

And like that, she placed the bow into her cube without taking her eyes off of him. Once it was away, Sungjin moved forward, but she still held out her dagger towards him.

‘He said boobs earlier... There’s no way I can put down my guard. Seeing how fast he pulled out his sword earlier, he could put me in danger in a split second.’

Reading her thoughts, Sungjin put all of his swords away in the cube.

“I have zero intentions to fight. I just want to talk.”

‘He put them away? What is he planning to do in case I attack?’

She was now deeply confused. She asked him

“... What is it?”

“I am not an enemy. In fact... I’ve come to help you.”

“Help with what? Trolls are already dead.”

He couldn’t hear her thoughts anymore. The 10 seconds must have passed. Sungjin pulled out the ‘Holy Water of Baptism’ from his vest and said

“This... is an item which increases your stats by a large margin. I’ll use this on you.”

“Why? How do I know it is not a poison?”

“It’s not a poison. I’m telling you, it’s beneficial.”

“If it is really that good... hand it over. I’ll use it on myself.”

Sungjin slapped his forehead. There was no time to convince her. But he didn’t want to lose this opportunity. It was then that the Zombie Samurai collapsed.

Sungjin didn’t do anything, and it just died on its own. It meant she was out of mana.

‘ ... ’

Sungjin considered his options. Then he made up his mind. He couldn't afford to let her go. She already proved her worth in skill and as a person. Sungjin prepared himself.

“Whew...”

He let out a long sigh and then charged towards her. Her eyes grew wide as she brandished her dagger against him. She was fast. She must have had high stats despite also investing in mana on the side.

But that was only in comparison to other hunters. Perhaps she could have put up a fight against Sungjin with Black Magic, but without mana, there was nothing she could do.

Sungjin twisted his body and dodged all of her strikes, and then he grabbed her wrist.

Once her hands were caught, she tried to kick him in the groin, but he moved to the side and dodged her.

Because of Sungjin moving to the side and her missing her kick, she lost balance and began to fall. Sungjin quickly raised his hands and grabbed her behind, holding her up.

Her sizable breasts jiggled in front of his eyes. The situation was turning strange again. Nada began to swear.

“You son of a bitch!”

It was too late to straighten out this situation. Sungjin pushed her down to the floor and saddled on top of her to prevent her from moving.

“Fucker!”

Nada continued to shower him with insults, but she couldn’t do anything. Sungjin opened the bottle of Holy water with one hand and sprayed her with it.

“Baptise”

Bright light emerged and enveloped her. At the same time, the Operator gave an announcement.

[You were ‘Chosen’ by someone. Title granted.]

Baptism was a success for now. Sungjin quickly got up and pulled her back up to her feet.

“I am sorry, I had no choice.”

But Nada’s expression towards Sungjin was far more wrathful

than it had ever been.

“Get out of my sight you piece of shit!”

Sungjin decided to ignore everything and focus on the key points.

“Title! Check the title!”

If she would just check the title, she would understand what had happened.

[Chosen one – Receive 20% of the chooser’s...]

Before the explanation could finish

[Returning to the Hunter’s Hall in 10 seconds.]

The Countdown began. The chapter was about to be finished.

[9, 8, 7]

Along with the Cube’s countdown, Sungjin said to her

“Please check your title and status screen!”

[6, 5, 4]

But she was glaring at him as if looking at a rapist.

“And please call for me, at the Black Market”

[3, 2, 1]

“Or if you’re ever in danger!”

[o]

Along with Sungjin’s words, the two disappeared from sight.

Sungjin was summoned to a room with what appeared to be an infinite number of columns called the ‘Hunter’s Hall’. The room was full of people, but no one spoke. Most of them appeared exhausted.

Meanwhile, the Operator began to speak.

[Welcome. Everyone present here has overcome nine chapters thus far.]

[Out of 7,310,067,613 participants in the first raid]

[the number of surviving hunters is 183,655.]

[Everyone present represents the top 0.0025% of humanity]

[and have proven with your own hands, your strength and your worth]

Sungjin looked around. There were still plenty of people around him, but it wasn't like last time where the crowd of people extended 'without end'. It was now possible to see the edge of where the crowd ended.

[Please continue to grow stronger and stronger]

[And clear the final raid.]

The Operator disappeared from the pillars. Instead, the image of staff members of Sungjin's orphanages appeared; Principal, Teachers, friends, etcetera. It was time to see the people stuck within the Purgatory.

Sungjin never felt strongly about the people within the

Purgatory, so he looked around him. By now, almost no one cried at the sight; if anything, they looked more determined than ever.

They have seen it often enough to get used to it; the remaining people were all strong enough to be able to move on.

[Once again,]

[If someone manages to clear the final raid]

[Everyone in Purgatory will be revived.]

Among the silence, someone yelled out loud with annoyance.

“So why were we called here?”

The Operator gave an explanation as if responding to him.

[From this point onward the raid will be carried out in not 5 man, but 10 man member format]

[The map and monsters will become more difficult to reflect this increase in membership.]

“10 man teams?”

“Twice as many people?”

People began to whisper. But

[Starting with next raid, please take extra precaution to preserve your life.]

[Teleporting to Black Market in 10 seconds.]

“Even 5 man teams were not trustable...”

“Right, what are we supposed to do now?”

“You tell us that NOW?”

Shouts of anger filled the hall but indifferent to their complaints,

[2, 1, 0]

Everyone was soon teleported away from the spot.

Once back at the Black market, Sungjin plopped down at the ‘First Drop’.

“Haa...”

“What would you like to drink, sir?”

Xiu Ran asked Sungjin politely, but Sungjin replied half-heartedly.

“Ah... cold water. Water.”

“Ah... ok...”

She left to get him a glass of water. Sungjin drank it and then remembered Nada’s words.

‘Get away from me you piece of shit!’

Sungjin massaged his forehead. In the past

‘So you survived. I look forward to working with you.’

‘Leave the back to me’

She was so friendly with him. This time, things went as wrong as it could possibly go.

‘But if she checks her title... she should understand my intentions...right?’

In truth, Sungjin was also somewhat interested in her due to her outrageous appearance. But a chance for a good first impression was forever lost. Sungjin took out 'Besgoro' from the cube.

He headbutted the skull before putting it on.

"You Perverted old man!"

'What? You were the one who said it out loud'

"It was because you kept on saying weird things!"

'Hey, why are you like this? As if I'm the only one in the wrong? You were staring at her too. At THAT. I told you before, but I can see what you can see... those enormous breasts.'

"There's a difference between thinking it and saying it out loud"

'The only difference is that I am more honest with myself. You said it out loud because you were focused on it as well, don't you think?'

Sungjin couldn't say anything to respond. It was the truth that his eyes were glued there as well. Besgoro continued.

'So did you baptise her? Did you spray that sticky fluid all over her...'

Sungjin took off the helmet before he finished.

‘Wow, this senile old thing... even after death...’

Sungjin vowed to get a different helm as soon as he finds one. Although it would be difficult to find one that could replace ‘Substitute casting’ and ‘Frenzy’.

Sungjin returned Besgoro back into the Cube. He drank the rest of the cold water and

“Thank you for the water”

He left the shop. He had baptised Franz and Nada. He wasn’t sure about Nada, but Franz would definitely call him. There was much he needed to do before the meeting with Franz.

Sungjin first visited the Pig Brothers’ auction house to put items up for sale.

“Set this one’s starting price at 3000, and 3400 instant buyout. This one... 3500 starting price and 4500 instant buyout please.”

“Understood, Items put up for auction.”

After putting up the eight items he had already determined the prices for,

“Operator, give me the four items I got from the last dimension.”

He checked the items obtained from the last dimension he had visited. But one of the four items caught his eye.

‘Eh...’

It was a necklace which looked like something an ancient South American Inca or an Aztec would wear; The necklace of the Berserker, Yanhurat – Mad God’s Voice’.

‘Two identical items... I heard something about synergy in the past... I guess it’s about time I visited Kargos.’

Kargos was a blacksmith who worked at a smithy to the southern end of the Black market. It was about the right time to begin using the Enhancement stone, so Sungjin wanted to take care of everything at once.

Sungjin placed both Yanhurats into the Cube and picked up the other Items dropped by the Samurai and the Berserker

“Set this at 2000 and 2500 instant buyout; this at 2700 and 3200...”

And placed them all on the auction house.

“Thanks”

He put the auction house behind him and began walking. Sungjin thought of the two individuals he had baptised.

‘Hmm, I hope he doesn’t call me until I’m done with my things... I should have told them to call me after sundown.’

He thought about Franz as such.

‘Will she understand my intentions if she checks the title and stats? What if she thinks I am an irredeemable pervert?’

He thought about Nada.

Chapter 091 – Black Market Ninth Shopping (2)

Sungjin headed towards the southern part of the market.

‘It was around here...’

While he was walking

‘Clang! Clang!’

He could hear the hammer banging away at the anvil. Sungjin headed towards the sound. Soon the furnace and the anvil came into view; Sungjin found Kargos’s Smithy. The Operator gave an announcement.

[This is the Smithy of Kargos]

[It is a place where items can be modified and enhanced.]

Sungjin entered the smithy and greeted the owner.

“Hello”

“Welcome”

A dwarf half the size of Sungjin returned his greetings.

“Any requests?”

“I want to enhance some things.”

“Oh ho, really? What item would you like to enhance?”

Sungjin removed the three swords from his hip, Blood Vengeance, Moon Specter, and Artemio, and placed them on top of the counter.

“Hmm? All of these?”

Sungjin shook his head.

“No no. I want to pick one of them... I was just wondering if I could preview the enhancements before I make my decision.”

Kargos shook his head at Sungjin’s question.

“Eey, of course not.”

“...I see...”

“I treat all items that pass through my hand like my own children; I give it my best for my children. But just because I am

their father does not mean I can predict how my children will end up as adults.”

Sungjin was a little disappointed as he would not be able to make a more informed decision.

“Ok, in that case...”

Sungjin picked up Blood Vengeance and put the sword back on his hip. He then picked up Artemio and put it away as well. The last one remaining was the Moon Specter, which he handed over as he said

“Please enhance this item.”

The reason why he chose Moon Specter was simple. Sungjin already knew Blood Vengeance’s enhancement effect.

The enhanced Blood Vengeance would get an incredibly strong skill, but it wasn’t something he needed any time soon. He hasn’t used Artemio for very long, so it was lower on his list of priorities.

Although if he was to consider its role as the ultimate ‘anti mage’ weapon, it seemed like it could also prove to be quite useful...

“Hmm, you sure? Ok, let’s see...”

Kargos received the Moon Specter from Sungjin and inspected it.

The Moon Specter's appearance couldn't be more worn out; He had found it buried within an ancient Columbarium. The paint had long since peeled off, and the pommel was terribly damaged.

But Kargos inspected the sword without minding its state, and then he pulled out the blade from the scabbard.

“Ooh”

He exclaimed once he saw the sharp edge of the blade.

“This is a Legendary Class weapon.”

He recognized the weapon in a single glance.

“Yes.”

“Do you have Enhancement stones? Legendary items require three stones.”

“I brought three.”

Sungjin took three out of the cube and handed it over.

“Hmm... Very good. I'll take care of this guy.”

“When should I come to pick it up?”

Sungjin knew the process from having enhanced Blood Vengeance in the past. But Moon Specter was a different item.

But Kargos gave the same answer as when he had taken Blood Vengeance to enhance.

“Tomorrow morning.”

“Tomorrow morning it is.”

“Yes. 8 in the morning... about one hour before the raid start.”

Sungjin nodded. It wasn't too bad. All he had to do was just come by in the morning. He had asked out of worry that he might not get the sword back in time.

“Understood. Then I'll leave it in your capable hands.”

Sungjin said. Kargos then held out his hands, palms facing up.

“10,000 Black Coins.”

“Ah...”

Sungjin had forgotten. Enhancements required money. Sungjin asked the Operator,

“Operator, how many coins do I have right now?”

[12,146]

Sungjin quickly did the math in his head.

‘I still have 3 unsold items left over from last time; I put up 7 new items today...a total of 10...’

Depending on competition and number sold, Sungjin expected anywhere from 30~50,000 coins.

‘...20,000 for Star of the Nameless, 15,000 for Gourmet’s Glasses... 35,000...’

Sungjin felt he could afford to spend 10,000 coins here. No items were as urgent as improving his item. The only thing that bothered him was being unable to buy the Elixir, but it was something that could be solved with money later.

It was more important to buy items for the moment.

‘About the Elixir... I can probably take my time.’

While Sungjin was taking time weighing his options, Kargos

added

“You could also pay when you come to pick it up.”

“Really?”

“Yeah well... if you aren't able to pick up your item because of lack of funds, you're the only one in trouble, right?”

He was right. The Moon Specter was worth far more than 10,000 coins. Legendary crafting material ‘Enhancement Stone’ was without a question priceless. Leaving behind his weapon here without picking it up was like leaving his clothes with a dry cleaner and not coming back to pick his things up.

Sungjin nodded.

“Then I'll just pay when I return to pick up the sword.”

This was better for Sungjin. He would be able to plan his budget better after he got his receipts from the auction. Kargos nodded.

“Okay.”

Sungjin decided to ask

“Ah... and I heard from before...”

“Yeah?”

“I heard that if you have two of the same item, you could get something called ‘Synergy’ or something...”

“Ah, yea. That’s possible. If you have two items, you can ‘Combine them’.”

“Combine?”

“Yeah. You can mix identical items and multiply the effects. The rating rises by one level.”

“And then... how is it related to enhancement stones?”

“Combining items have the same effect as using the Enhancement stone. But instead of Enhancement stone, you are using two items.”

“And the number needed?”

“The number is the same as with Enhancement stone. To raise the rating from heroic to legendary, you need another identical item or one enhancement stone. To go from Legendary to [Unique legendary](#), you need three identical items or three Enhancement Stones. Understand?”

Sungjin turned towards the Operator's Cube.

“Operator, give me Yanhurat. Both of them.”

Two Yanhurats came out of the cube. Sungjin handed it over to Kargos.

“They are Heroic class items.”

Kargos inspected the Yanhurats and glanced towards Sungjin and said

“This... is quite a dangerous item. Great effects... but terrible consequence.”

Sungjin nodded.

“I know.”

“But if you add these two items, it improves not only the effect but also the side effect... will you be okay with this?”

Sungjin bit his lip.

“Yes... it is not an item I would ever use other than dire circumstances.”

Yes, Sungjin never relied on the strength of Yanhurat unless it was absolutely necessary, like when he was not yet strong enough in chapter 2 against Ahenna, or when he met the crazy strong boss Calian in chapter 8.

If he was going to keep it around as his last resort, then it was better to have maximized risk/reward.

“Ok... then I could combine them immediately... Except it will cost 3000 coins. And the fee is non-negotiable.”

It was a small price to pay for the return on investment. Sungjin said

“Ok, please do it now.”

Kargos took the Yanhurats into the smithy and placed them into a box and asked Sungjin

“Hey, do you know this box? It’s quite a famous one.”

Sungjin shook his head. It was an item he had never seen before. He had only ever enchanted items here in the past. He had never combined items.

“Really? I guess some people don’t know.”

Kargos shook the box twice. From the box

‘Jiiang!’

A burst of light shot out accompanied by a loud noise. Kargos calmly opened the box and handed the Yanhurat to Sungjin. The Operator’s Cube gave an announcement.

[Congratulations. Legendary item ‘Yanhurat – Mad God’s Whisper’ obtained.]

Sungjin lifted up the new item to inspect it.

Yanhurat – Mad God’s Whisper
Legendary Necklace

Passive Skill

Indomitable (II)

Immune to all types of restraints and debuffs. 10 Second duration.

Active Skill

Zealot (V)

Increase damage and speed by 500% for 30 seconds.

Reduce HP to 1/5 after the effect ends.

Necklace with the sealed power of the Mad God Yanhurat.
His faint whisper can be heard from the necklace.

“Whoa...”

Sungjin carefully looked over the necklace. It was unbelievably more powerful. The effect jumped up from 3X to 5X the speed and power.

‘5 times more powerful than now...’

It would be near impossible for any other hunter to even follow his movements with their eyes. But in return, the penalty would reduce his HP to 1/5. Having only 1/5 HP remaining would be dangerous even for Sungjin.

The Item doesn't say it, but there was another hidden penalty; unbelievable rebound right after use.

The item explosively increased strength and speed for a short time, so not only did HP decrease, it would temporarily limit the strength and speed of the user afterwards. Since the item had upgraded specs, the rebound would be even worse than before.

As Sungjin was looking at the item

‘Kill! I said Kill them!’

The voice of Yanhurat was yelling faster than before. Sungjin jumped back in surprise and hurriedly put the item away in the cube.

‘The effects have upgraded... but now I have to be even more careful when using it.’

Kargos asked Sungjin innocently

“How is it?”

“It’s great. Then I’ll see you tomorrow for the Moon Specter.”

“Ah, Ok.”

Sungjin left the Smithy after finishing his business and returned to the Ninety Nine Nights where Dalupin and his comrades were waiting. At the front yard of the Inn

“Woof!”

“Kii?”

Cain and the baby Griffin Rajenta were playing. Cain had by now fully matured and Rajenta was only just a newborn, but they were

already similar in size. They were of different species after all.

When they noticed Sungjin approaching, they stopped playing and came running towards him. Rajenta even flapped his wings on the way. Sungjin embraced his two beasts as he said

“Haha! I’m back, let’s go inside Cain, Rajenta.”

“Brrrrr”

The ghost stallion Shadowrun was waiting calmly in the stable, unlike the two animals. Sungjin had no opportunity to use him recently, but there would be a time when he is needed. When Sungjin entered the inn, he saw the last summon.

“Welcome back Master. I am glad to see you are well.”

Magician Soldamyr greeted him in.

“I’m glad to see you as well.”

Sungjin sat down at the nearest table. Dalupin came forward to ask

“Welcome back. What should I get for you?”

“Yes, I would like...”

Sungjin thought about it for a moment and named the first food that came to mind.

“Hamburger. Please give me a hamburger. Two paddies of meat and two layers of cheese. Lots of lettuce.”

“Understood.”

While Sungjin was ordering food, he noticed Cain and Rajenta.

“Have those two eaten?”

“Ah, you typically eat with them, so I haven’t fed them yet.”

“Ah thank you very much. Please also serve them food when you finish the burgers.”

“Understood.”

It is said that eating together improved trust between people. It was no different for animals. Once the dinner was ordered, Sungjin folded his arms and leaned back on the chair.

Cain and Rajenta were playfully nudging each other. Then he remembered something. Sungjin said to the cube.

“Operator... Was it the Fruit of Evolution? Give it to me.”

Note: The Unique in Unique Legendary means there can only be one of its kind like we have seen in the case of the book Romance of the Three Kingdoms. But we think it might not be correct when it comes to weapons (The author has used the same term for the higher grade of weapons as seen in the chap). We are asking the author regarding the term and will update accordingly.

Chapter 092 – Black Market Ninth Shopping (3)

Sungjin held ‘Merka – Pulp of Evolution’ without much thought. But as soon as the item emerged from the cube,

“Kr?”

“Aru?”

Cain and Rajenta stopped rolling around and fell silent. They were staring at the fruit in Sungjin’s hands.

‘Hmm? What’s going on?’

Sungjin was tilting his head. Soldamyr swallowed audibly as he said

“What an... enticing fruit.”

‘Enticing?’

Sungjin moved the fruit closer to take another whiff of the fruit.

“Blagh...”

It still smelled strange

But all three of the summons had their eyes glued on the fruit as if it was the most delicious smelling food in the world. Soldamyr tried to appear calm, but he couldn't look away, and Cain was uncharacteristically panting with his tongue out. Rajenta was trying to climb on top of Sungjin's knees.

“Kaa!”

“Go away Rajenta; I'm not giving it to you.”

Sungjin pushed Rajenta away. But from the door,

“Hiii!”

Even Shadowrun had come. Sungjin put the item away for now. Rajenta flew up and pecked the cube few times with its beak. Of course, the Cube remained unscathed.

“Just what...”

Soldamyr answered Sungjin's question.

“I believe that it is a fruit that contains a large amount of Mana. To tell you the truth, I felt a strong compulsion to eat that fruit as soon as I noticed it.”

“Really?”

“Yes. I have never partaken in alcohol or smoking... but I’d imagine that it was similar to an alcoholic man getting a whiff of a drink.”

He must be onto something about the fruit containing large amounts of mana, judging by how Cain and Rajenta were still staring at the cube. Thankfully

“Sir Hunter, your dinner is served.”

Dalupin arrived with a large burger and plates of Raw meat. Cain and Rajenta turned their attention to their own dinners. Sungjin picked up the burger Dalupin had brought him and thought.

‘This item... I should only give it to a summon when none of the others can witness it.’

He took a big bite out of the hamburger.

‘Crunch’

The sound of the crispy lettuce crunching in his mouth was followed by the soft bread, the succulent meat, and the thick flavor of the cheese coming together in his mouth.

“Mmm~”

Sungjin let out a satisfied moan as he began eating his burger. While he was busy eating his meal, the Operator suddenly gave an announcement.

[The chosen one requested your teleportation.]

At the same time, the image of Franz appeared above the cube.

[Will you accept the request? 10, 9]

‘Hmm?’

Sungjin stopped eating his burger and stared at the image.

[7, 6, 5]

Franz looked nervous, with his arms crossed and tapped his feet.

[4, 3, 2]

It looked like the time would run out if Sungjin just stared at the image. Sungjin said to the cube

“Okay... I accept.”

[Teleport request accepted.]

As soon as the words had left his mouth Sungjin vanished from the spot and reappeared in the Black market. Seeing Sungjin appear next to him Franz couldn't help but exclaim

“Oh!”

In surprise.

“It works!”

“Y...Yeah...”

Sungjin took a look around. This was close to the auction house at the center of the Black Market. It looked the same as his market, but it appeared that he had really teleported elsewhere. Franz asked Sungjin

“How is this possible?”

Sungjin was about to answer when he felt a pang of hunger. The hamburger he bit into was gone. Sungjin asked Franz.

“Have you eaten dinner yet?”

“No, not yet.”

“Then... let’s first eat then talk.”

“Sounds good to me.”

The two men entered into the entertainment district of the Black Market.

[Welcome! This is Yaochan’s ThumThum]

[A shop selling many different kinds of steamed buns.]

“What would you like to eat, Mr. hunters?”

A bulky bear demihuman approached them. Being called ‘Hunters’ felt awkward, as he had always shopped alone.

But the shop owner didn’t seem to find it strange that there were

two hunters present. As if Sungjin's presence was expected. Sungjin ordered first.

“Mandu Soup, please. And Shrimp Gyoza.”

Franz ordered as well

“Ah...well... what he ordered.”

Once the order was made, the men fell silent. It wasn't like they had become best of friends after just one raid. They were slightly awkward.

‘What should I say?’

Sungjin was unsure how to proceed. But

“Oh yeah... you asked earlier, how is this possible?”

“Ah, yes.”

“So basically...”

He was looking straight at Sungjin. But the only thing Sungjin could tell him now was

“I will let you know when the time is right. So it's a secret for

now.”

That was it. Sungjin had thought this earlier, but allowing him to know about ‘Darker than Black’ was still too early. If he recklessly tells people about the shop, an ‘uncontrollable development’ may occur.

“Ready... you say?”

“Yes, not only for you but for me as well. Going from dimension to dimension...”

The Bear demihuman interrupted them

“Your food is ready”

Gyoza and steaming bowls of Mandu Soup were brought to them. Sungjin picked up the chopstick and said

“Is a quite a dangerous thing.”

It was not a lie. To begin with, Trolls were those who aimed to monopolize points by murdering their own teammates. They broke an unspoken rule to take more points, so they were naturally stronger than most others.

And because they had no inhibitions about attacking others, those with a similar level of skill were put at a large disadvantage.

Of course, it was different for a Troll hunting specialist like Sungjin.

“So I will keep it a secret for now. When the time is right, I will let you know.”

Thankfully, Franz did not pry further.

“Ok understood. Then please let me know when the time comes.”

Sungjin nodded and continued to eat the Mandu with his fork. Sungjin thought

‘10/10 reaction.’

If he had demanded to know at this point, Sungjin would have regretted baptising him.

“Oh by the way, what is your name, Sir Adjudicator? I can’t continue to call you Adjudicator, now can I?”

Sungjin looked at him and said

“K.”

He told him his cover name. There was no reason to let anyone know his real name. He was becoming used to the new name

anyhow.

“Ah, I see. Kei. I don’t know how this happened... but thank you for choosing me.”

Sungjin replied

“Well, there are lots of reasons why I chose you... but first, about that buff, you can probably tell that I am quite strong.”

“Yes, I understand better than anyone how strong you are.”

“And the stronger I become, the more power up you get.”

Franz nodded.

“What I want from you is cooperation. To work together in overcoming the final raid together... Cooperation, you understand right?”

“Of course. But... isn’t the raid designed for us to work together already?”

“Yes. but along the way, there are plenty of people who have stopped wanting to cooperate with others.”

“You mean Trolls?”

“Yes. Have you come across them?”

“Yes. Twice. Once at the Cemetery. Once at the Plateau. I took too much Contribution... so they became jealous of me.”

As Sungjin thought, Franz had already met trolls. But the fact that Franz was sitting here eating soup with Sungjin meant that the one who died was not himself.

“Do you have the Adjudicator title?”

“No, what does the title do?”

“The title allows you to claim two items when you kill a troll.”

“Oooh... I would love to have a title like that. Those bastards...”

Franz stopped eating to grip his fork tightly. This side of Franz reminded Sungjin of the time Franz came charging towards him.

‘Oh yeah... he was this kind of guy. The title of ‘Adjudicator’ fits him better than I.’

Sungjin thought.

“Anyway, there are always trolls. Even when only a few people

remain they ar... will still exist.”

Sungjin was about to say “are there” and corrected himself since he couldn’t reveal that he had experienced things before.

“So... my goal is to eliminate trolls and gather people like you who are, well so to speak, cooperative and good individuals to finish the raid together.”

“That’s... a great plan.”

Franz looked at Sungjin with sparkling eyes.

“Yes. As you might have noticed from your Chosen One title... my stats, you can have as much as 20% of it as bonus. In other words, the stronger I become, the stronger you become. You understand, right?”

“Yes”

Franz nodded.

“I will continue to become stronger. Which is to say you will become stronger as well. So when there are not very many remaining, in the end, I hope to find you there.”

“That is no problem. If I can’t even survive with his kind of buff... It means that I have no right to be there in the first place.”

“If there is something you can’t overcome yourself, you can call upon my help once a day. I can help take care of business on your behalf.”

“Ah, I don’t think I’ll need to do that though...”

“But in case of Hidden bosses or... trolls...”

Franz became serious at Sungjin’s words.

“If I come across a troll, I will kill them myself.”

Sungjin grinned.

“Ok. Good. I’ll rely on you.”

“No, I’ll definitely be the one to rely on you.”

And so the two men shook hands over the bowls of Mandu Soup. Afterwards, the men exchanged small talks.

“So Franz, are you German?”

“No, I am Austrian... Which is closely related to the German people. What about you, Kei?”

“Ah, I am Korean.”

Once the dinner was over, Sungjin said to him

“From now on... if you don’t have anything else to do, call for me at 6 pm. It’d be nice to share dinner with someone else, right?”

“That sounds great.”

“Ah, and I have one more tip. There is a ring merchant close to the weapon shop. Go and buy a Ring of the Rich and equip it.”

“Ring of the Rich?”

“Yeah. Most people aren’t aware of it... but it is an extremely cost efficient item. Make sure you buy it.”

“Understood.”

Sungjin said to him at last

“Ok then... Until next time. In... Be careful of the next raid.”

“Ok.”

Sungjin was about to return to his own dimension when he remembered something.

“Oh yeah.”

“Yes?”

“There’s something I have to do before I go.”

Sungjin said to the Operator

“Operator, please give me Cain’s Wooden Figurine, Soldamyr’s lamp, Rajenta’s egg, and Shadowrun’s medallion.”

Items poured out of the cube.

“Hmm...”

Sungjin stared at them and then picked up Cain’s Wooden Figurine. He threw it in the air. A bull sized Cain was summoned to the Black Market.

“Awoooo~”

Sungjin said to the Operator after watching Cain howl.

“Give me the fruit too.”

When the Merka Fruit appeared, Cain was transfixed upon the fruit. Sungjin threw the fruit towards Cain.

“You wanted to eat it right?”

He picked Cain for two reasons. First, Cain was continuing to grow larger and larger. In terms of being close to the ‘milestone’, Cain would be the closest.

Second, Cain was his oldest Summon that Sungjin was most comfortable utilizing in combat. If anyone deserved to be empowered, it was Cain.

Cain devoured the fruit in one bite.

His entire body was enveloped in bright light, and then he grew rapidly. Sungjin was forced to turn his eyes away due to the blinding light, but the Operator was the one to tell him the result.

[Congratulations. Legendary item ‘Grand Kin – Master of the Forest’ Obtained.]

Chapter 093 – Black Market Ninth Shopping

(4)

After the blinding rays of light subsided, Sungjin and Franz stared at the gigantic figure of Cain standing before them. He was about double the previous size. His eyes were level with Sungjin now.

The suddenly-taller Cain took a look at himself and then

“Awoo~”

Let out a long howl. He sounded quite pleased. Just then, Sungjin noticed that the figurine had changed as well. The figurine was larger and slightly glossy. It was looking more like Cain now. Sungjin held the item up for inspection.

Grand Kin – Master of the Forest

Legendary Summon

Special ability – Spiritual Link (Grand Kin)

Spiritual Link(Grand Kin) – Loyal Familiar, Summon Grand Kin.

If Summon is killed, or if 10 minutes pass from the time of summoning, it disappears.

Grand Kin who inherited the Forest from his mother.

According to legend, he can communicate with other creatures of the forest and command the spirits.

“Whoa...”

Sungjin was staring at the screen. Franz was also standing wide mouthed.

“This... from chapter 2...?”

He must have mistaken Cain for Ahenna. Although, the current form of Cain looked just like her.

“Grr?”

Cain walked towards Franz. Perhaps due to his size, Franz unconsciously took a step back.

“Whao...”

Cain tilted his head and turned to look at Sungjin. He began to resemble a human.

‘Master, who is he? How can you be in the Black Market together with him?’

He seemed to ask with his gaze. Sungjin pet his head and said

“He’s my comrade. Just like you are mine. Comrade.”

Cain seemed amazed and turned to resume staring at Franz.

‘Sniff sniff’

He smelled the air as if trying to memorize the scent. Sungjin said to Franz

“He is my friend Cain. As you can see he is a wolf... but he is the most dependable ally.”

“I see.”

Now that the ‘Comrade’ was mentioned, he thought of something.

“Oh yeah... about that...”

“Please tell me.”

Sungjin scratched his head and said

“What do you think of taking 10% penalty from Raid reward in Coins?”

“10%... Is this about the Ring of the Rich? Didn't you say that it would give me additional 10% instead?”

“Eh?”

Sungjin stopped as if he was hit in the head. Now that he thought of it, buying “Ring of the Rich” would eliminate the 10% penalty.

“Ah... in that case... follow me.”

While on the way to the Jeweler, Sungjin told Franz about the penalty. Of course, not everything was revealed.

“This is a secret but... in order for me to ‘Choose’ someone, it needs the sacrifice of another. A permanent 10% reduction in coin reward... that kind of sacrifice.”

“Really?”

“What I want... is for you to also partake in that sacrifice. If you can handle that burden, it will allow me to select another ‘Chosen’ as a Comrade.”

“Ohh...”

While they were exchanging words, they arrived at the Jeweler. Sungjin asked as soon as he entered the shop

“Meridian, Heart of Gold – Ring of the Rich please.”

“Alright”

The Cat shop owner retrieved a simple blue sapphire ring from the back. Sungjin said to Franz

“I’ll buy this for you. It’s only 500 coins...”

But Meridian took away the ring and said

“Wait! This isn’t 500 coins.”

“Hmm?”

Sungjin was shocked.

“That was a long time ago. It’s 5000 coins now.”

“What?”

Sungjin exclaimed. Meridian explained

“This item gets more expensive as time passes. It’s such a popular item that the price fluctuates.”

She was right. He had received between 500~1000 coins in bonus last round. So if this only cost 500 coins, he would see a return on his investment the very next round.

Anyone who is aware of this ring’s existence would save up to buy it ASAP.

“But 5000 coins is too expensive!”

Sungjin was beginning to get angry. Meridian replied in a calm voice

“It’s still on the cheap side. Further on the raid, this becomes even more expensive. I can’t give you any discount. You know already right? The rules of this place?”

There was no such thing as barter.

“Ugh...”

Franz stepped forward.

“Ahh Kei, I’ll buy this myself. It’s supposed to be my item anyway.”

“But I am just trying to use it to reduce your penalty...”

“You already gave me an incredible amount of stat points. If I could pay just 5000 Black Coins to buy this much stats, I would buy it a hundred more times. And I do have some coins left anyhow.”

Before Sungjin could reply

“Please give me that.”

He immediately bought the ring from Meridian. And then

“Now... on to the next...”

He faced Sungjin. Sungjin stared at him for a moment before presenting the ‘Ring of Helrick’.

When Sungjin returned to the Ninety Nine Nights, Dalupin was cleaning away Sungjin’s uneaten burger.

“Ah... You disappeared and didn’t return for a while, so I was cleaning up now.”

Sungjin said to him

“Don’t worry and clean up. I ate somewhere else. And...”

Cain was behind him

“Grr~”

He was unable to enter the Inn and was stuck outside.

“You’ll probably have to feed him double the amount.”

Dalupin saw Cain’s figure and replied

“Ah... you’re probably right.”

He nodded. Rajenta stared at Cain’s enlarged body and

“Kaa...?”

He hid himself behind a chair. It would be difficult for them to roll and fool around like before. Soldamyr saw Cain and understood that Sungjin must have given him the fruit.

“Cain is looking more dependable now.”

“Yes. On the next opportunity, it will be your turn, Soldamyr.”

“No no, even if I were to eat that thing, I doubt much would change in me.”

“Is that so?”

While Sungjin was exchanging words with him, Dalupin approached them with a stack of papers.

“Here are the receipts from the auction, and the information page on the next Raid.”

Sungjin first checked the information sheet.

‘Information pertaining to ‘Red Dragon’s Lair’

This time reading the information sheet in detail was important. Sungjin put the sheet into his vest and sat on the table to review the receipts.

‘This is 3000... the minimum price. Damn... I should have sold it for more.’

‘This one is 5300! Nice!’

‘Oh! 7000 instant buy?! Let’s see, Knight of the Emperor? An excellent title. Must be skilled and wealthy.’

Sungjin counted the coins like a child receiving his allowance and put the receipts one by one into the cube. He had sold 9 out of 10 items up for auction.

He was now so experienced with selling via the Auction that he could be considered a master. Sungjin asked the Operator

“So how much did I make this time?”

[41151 Coins]

“What’s the total then?”

[50297 Coins]

‘The most pressing item is... Star of the nameless at 20,000 coins. Gourmet’s monocle 15,000 coins. And Moon Specter’s Enhancement cost of 10,000. 45,000 Coins in total... I have enough.’

He would have 5000 coins remaining after buying everything he needed. It was because the income from the Auction was higher than he expected.

‘5000 coins left... I should get the Elix...’

Then he remembered.

‘Oh wait... Recharging the marbles’

He had forgotten for a moment. He would need 5000 coins to recharge all five of them. His remaining funds were 297 Black Coins.

‘... Ok, Elixir is for next time then...’

Sungjin got up after making up his mind. He had finally finished everything he needed to for today. The only thing that was left to do was to shower and rest. But once again, he remembered

‘Nada...’

If she checked her status screen, it would have resolved her misunderstanding of his intentions. And if she checked the ‘Chosen One’ title, she would be aware that she is able to call him.

‘I wonder if she will call me...’

Sungjin looked out into the darkness through the window. But throughout the night,

[The chosen one requested your teleportation.]

No such announcement came.

“Here is the Star of the Nameless, Gourmet’s Monocle.”

Sungjin gathered them from the table. Finally, the man handed over five brightly sparkling marbles.

“And they are done recharging.”

Sungjin put all the marbles away. And finally he took out the white coin and said in a business-like tone

“One more Holy Water please.”

But at his request, ‘The Man’ grinned with a knowing smile.

“Eh, are you enjoying the Holy Water?”

“Yes.”

His grin grew revealing his teeth.

“Hmm... Ok, good luck.”

A distasteful laughter. Sungjin wanted to leave. But then the man said one more thing.

“The next raid... is the Red Dragon’s Lair.”

This was the first time he ever mentioned anything about the raid. Sungjin turned and said

“Yes.”

“Hmm... Well, good luck. The Red Dragon is... well... a historical and... a powerful being.”

A strange nuance; As if he was hiding something.

“... I know.”

Sungjin replied and left the shop. It was still dark outside.

“Operator, time?”

[4:45 AM.]

‘Is Moon Specter... done upgrading?’

The Smithy was on the way to the Ninety Nine Nights anyway, located to the south. It was only a slight detour to visit the Smithy first. He felt that it couldn't do any harm to visit it on his way back, since if it was already done he wouldn't have to make a second trip later.

‘Well, there is nothing to lose.’

Sungjin made up his mind and turned his feet towards the smithy. It was still before the first twilight of the day.

‘Clang! Clang!’

He could hear metal clash against each other in the distance. Sungjin continued to walk over to the Smithy. He saw Kargos hammering away, sweating buckets late into the night.

Sungjin got quite close to him, but he continued to hammer away not having realized that Sungjin had arrived.

“Clang! Clang!”

Sungjin continued to stand silently as to avoid distracting him. Kargos continued to hammer away for another hour.

“Clang! Clang!”

He hammered and hammered until finally he dipped the entire length of the sword into the cold water and extracted it. The Moon Specter's bluish blade reflected the moonlight and became even more vibrant.

Kargos closely inspected the blade and muttered to himself (although he wasn't alone)

“Whew... almost done. What a difficult item to work with. But... definitely worth the extra effort. A blade with this much Death Ki...”

And at that moment, Sungjin who had been watching for over an hour finally interrupted him.

“Thank you for your hard work Kargos.”

“Oh My Goodness!”

Kargos flinched as if he had seen a ghost.

“You surprised me! How long were you standing there for?”

“Since just a moment ago.”

Kargos calmed his rapidly beating heart.

“Well... anyway, the sword is finished. This was most definitely a possessed sword... a ghost blade.”

Sungjin was surprised to hear that.

“Oh, you were able to tell? It is a sword with the power of a spirit...”

“Of course I can tell. And...”

His voice trailed off. He then said

“Well, see for yourself.”

He handed over the newly upgraded Moon Specter to Sungjin.

Chapter 094 – Black Market Ninth Shopping (5)

Sungjin checked the updated and upgraded Moon Specter’s status screen. The Operator brought up the display shortly.

Moon Specter – Possessed sword of the Malevolent Spirit

Unique Legendary Katana – Strength SS Dexterity S Mind A

Passive

Soul Absorption(IV)

Recover 4% of the total mana per hit.

Blessing of the Ghost(I) – Spirit of the Ghost Blade protects the user.

Active Skill

Deathly Wail (IV)

A ghost will roam the vicinity for 10 seconds to induce strong fear in all nearby creatures.

Cooldown 20 minutes

Sword possessed by a malevolent Spirit

Many things had changed. Sungjin checked each stat, comparing

them to his memory.

‘Strength and Dex... and the mind all rose by a tier. Soul Absorption rose by 2%... Blessing of the Ghost? What’s that? Deathly Wail changed to a continuous type. But 20 minute cooldown? That’s too long! Should I just be happy that the effect upgraded from fear to strong fear?’

Sungjin was checking the changes one by one when

‘We finally meet, Master.’

He heard a soft feminine voice coming from the sword. He was shocked on hearing it and stared at his sword. Kargos grinned when he saw Sungjin’s reactions.

He must have heard her voice while working.

‘I have always been protecting you, but I was unable to greet you until now. I am Moon Specter, the spirit sealed within the blade.’

Sungjin said to her

“You are the ghost from the cemetery...”

‘That is correct. You were unafraid of my appearance and even decided to keep the sword I am bound to. Most people ran away due to my appearance...’

‘I died once too’

He didn’t tell her what he was thinking and instead replied

“Thank you. I have defeated many of my foes with your help.”

‘I am glad to hear that.’

Sungjin felt a little embarrassed when he noticed that Kargos was watching him exchange words with the ghost.

Like with Besgoro, speaking with the spirits would look like he was talking to himself. Sungjin bowed deeply towards Kargos.

“Thank you for your hard work.”

“Yeah. Go ahead and draw the sword first.”

Sungjin did as the blacksmith asked and pulled out the sword from the scabbard.

“Wow...”

Sungjin couldn’t help but exclaim when he saw the blade. The blade of the Moon Specter had always been impressive, but it looked even more sinister and fancy. Kargos said

“I noticed that a spirit was sealed into the blade while working on it... so I put in a bit more effort in fixing it up. It’s like someone’s home you know.”

“Thank you very much”

“But... you know... about the scabbard... I haven’t gotten started on it yet, so it’s the same as before... If you just wait another hour, I can make you a new one.”

“No no, there’s no need. I’ll use the old one.”

“Are you sure? It’s so worn out.”

“No, it will be fine. I like it better this way.”

Sungjin shook his head. The Moon Specter’s worn out appearance was better. The visual of a specter jumping out of a tattered and aged scabbard was like a scene out of a horror movie. Fear is more effective when it is unexpected.

“Yeah? Then do as you please.”

“Then I’ll go ahead and hand over the fee now.”

“Ah alright.”

Sungjin sent forth his cube to complete the transaction of 10,000 coins.

“Thank you. I’ll be back again.”

Sungjin left once he bid goodbye. He headed towards the Ninety Nine Nights after leaving the smithy. Meanwhile, he asked the most pressing question in his mind.

“How did you become sealed in the blade?”

‘I always had a weak body since young. I was 20 when I died of an illness. My parents mourned my death and anchored my soul to the Columbarium. I grieved my fate, but I found solace in that place.’

Sungjin recalled the Columbarium the day he found Moon Specter. It was old and weathered, but it still looked like it was well decorated when it was first built.

‘But the day after I died, the Necromancer Oryx appeared at my grave and cast a strange spell upon me. He had known of my passing at a young age and intended to turn me into a banshee...’

Necromancer Oryx. He was the Greysoul Cemetery’s hidden boss.

‘I put up a fight, so Oryx sealed me within one of my father’s

swords. That is why I was unable to move on and was forced to wander around the sword.'

"Yeah... Necromancer Oryx... I killed him though?"

'Yes, you had slain him using me. Thanks to you I was able to get my revenge.'

Sungjin tried to remember the event. Now that he thought of it, he had obtained the sword before fighting Oryx. He had no idea he was carrying out her revenge for her at the time.

'I would like to thank you once more.'

"No need. I only did it because of the mission anyway. But... are you okay? Continuing to fight while trapped in that sword?"

'Yes, It is fine. At first, I was afraid... but I am used to it now... It's fun watching everyone run away terrified of me.'

"Don't you want to move on?"

'No. Things are fine as they are now. I'll move on when the time is right.'

Her words made him feel strange, hearing from a 20 year old virgin lady that she had grown accustomed to the bloody battle.

“Oh yeah, what does the Blessing of the Ghost passive do? How does it activate?”

‘After I became a ghost, my perception had vastly improved. Well... not really perception... more like 6th sense? If something dangerous is happening without your awareness, I will give you a warning.’

He wasn’t sure how yet, but it sounded like it could be useful.

“Really? Thanks.”

‘You’re welcome.’

While exchanging words with her, he recalled Besgoro’s existence.

‘I’ve got two ghosts now... at least this lady seems calm enough... could they speak to each other? If they could... Besgoro is a perverted old man who can’t keep his eyes off of young ladies...’

Even as he thought so, he said to Moon Specter

“Well, I look forward to working with you as always.”

‘Me as well.’

Sungjin arrived at the Ninety Nine Nights while having a conversation with her. He arrived next to Cain who had grown so large that he could no longer enter the inn.

“Woof grr”

Sungjin had an idea of what Cain wanted to convey.

“Ah.. I was just retrieving this...”

When Sungjin lifted up the sword to show Cain, Cain looked around, as if he was seeing something invisible.

‘Hmm... I think I’ve heard that animals could see ghosts with their eyes...’

“Yeah, I came with the lady. I’m not sure if you were aware of her since before though.”

He said as he entered the inn. Behind him

“Arf woof!”

Cain barked. Sungjin said to him

“Ok, see you in a bit Cain.”

‘Gourmet’s Monocle... use with Romance of the Three Kingdoms... Star of the nameless...’

Star of the Nameless would come in handy throughout the chapter. Use Master Hunter to start, switch to Treasure Hunter for the hidden pieces, and finally Adjudicator for troll hunting.

“Operator equip the Master Hunter title.”

[Applied]

Sungjin had activated the ‘Master Hunter’ Title for the first time in a while. Afterwards, he allocated his points.

“2000 to Strength, 2000 to Dexterity, 1000 to Endurance, 1000 to Magic Power, and 3853 to Mind Power.”

[Applied]

“How do my stats look now?”

Title: Master Hunter

HP: 108100 MP: 127990

Strength: 18086 13912 (+ 4174)

Dexterity: 18971 14593 (+ 4378)

Endurance: 10810 8315 (+ 2495)

Magic Power: 7955 6119 (+ 1836)

Mind Power: 12799 9845 (+ 2954)

Unallocated Points: 0

The main goal of stat allocation was the continual growth of Strength Dexterity and Endurance. Followed by Mind power and Magic power. If Magic power rose by too much, then he would only be able to cast spells once or twice.

He had the help of Moon Specter and the Lich's finger to assist in regaining mana, but he needed high Mind Power to use multiple spells per fight. More so if he wanted to chain spells together with Besgoro.

Now that Sungjin was looking at his stats, he thought

'I should start allocating points as soon as I get them... so that it could benefit the people who receive buffs from me.'

The 'Chosen One' receives 20% of his basic stat points. If he allocates the points earlier, they can benefit from his stats.

The stronger the Chosen Ones become, the easier the end game would become. Once he finished allocating points, Sungjin prepared his gear one by one.

If one thing changed, it was that he had Moon Specter as the starting weapon. In the past, he had left the Moon Specter on his side at times due to having lower attack rating than Blood Vengeance, and lower Magic resist compared to the Artemio, using it primarily for the Ghastly Wail. But now the stats of the sword outshone both of the other two swords.

“Don’t worry. I’ll slowly upgrade you guys as well.”

Once he was done double-checking his things, he took out Besgoro and equipped it. Finally, Besgoro said to him

‘I missed you, although it has only been a day.’

Sungjin shook his head.

“No thanks.”

‘But... what’s this feeling...’

Sungjin felt a premonition.

‘...No way... can he sense Moon Specter?’

But

‘Ah, Hello Mr Besgoro. I can hear the two of you speak.’

Moon Specter was the first to speak.

‘Ooh... I see that the Moon Specter lady is now able to communicate as well. Congratulations congratulations.’

‘Thank you.’

The worst case scenario came to pass. Sungjin cringed thinking that Besgoro was going to make sexually harassive statements towards Moon Specter with him stuck in the middle. Sungjin, worrying for the future, preemptively said

“I forbid you from speaking to each other. It can’t be helped if you are conversing with me, but speaking with each other without me present is absolutely not okay.”

‘Ok.’

‘Understood, Master.’

The two ghosts agreed for now. Sungjin decided to put the final nail in the coffin.

“Especially you Besgoro grandpa, if you break this rule I will sell you off at the auction house.”

‘Okay okay. Anyway... what about that boo... I mean the glamorous lady, did she not contact you afterwards?’

Sungjin remembered about Nada. The day had passed and the morning came, but she still had not contacted him.

“... Yes.”

Sungjin answered feeling downhearted. He came back down to the 1st floor of the Ninety Nine Nights.

“Dalupin, Vanilla Latte and one slice of cheesecake.”

“Understood Mr Hunter.”

Once the breakfast was ordered, he began to read the ‘Information regarding the Red Dragon’s Lair’ in great detail. The next raid was the 10 man Raid.

No matter how strong Sungjin had become, this was no longer a format of Raid he could complete alone. Sungjin read the note while munching away at the cake.

And when the time came, he was teleported.

To the Red Dragon's Lair.

Chapter 095 – Red Dragon's Lair

Black clouds blocked out the sun. Ash fell like rain from the sky, and scalding gas shot out of the cracks in the earth.

Lava flowed down the path, melting all in its way. Sungjin arrived in the middle of the cave.

A round obsidian above helped keep the temperature down. The Operator began an explanation.

[Welcome. This is the Angor Volcano]

[It is the place where the Fire Dragon Khal Gal made his lair.]

[Please be warned. The Red Dragon Khal Gal just reached full maturity]

[and is infamous for his brutality.]

The level of difficulty for this raid was really high. If the ten hunters aren't able to cooperate effectively, then it was purgatory time for everyone. Sungjin stopped to try and recall the events from the past.

‘It's been a while. I thought I was going to die here for sure.’

During the previous raid, the tank had died and Sungjin was forced to take vanguard, but he was blown away by a single strike from the dragon's paws leaving him in a half-dead state.

By the time he regained consciousness, only 3 of the original 10 were still alive.

‘Now I should be able to pull the same weight as 5 people so the clear shouldn’t be impossible... but I should still be cautious...’

Just then a terrible thought crossed his mind.

‘But... does this map have a hidden boss too?’

It was difficult to imagine that there would be a boss on this map who was even more powerful than the Red Dragon Khal Gal. In fact, the raid title was ‘Red Dragon’s Lair’; having a creature or being more powerful than a Dragon coexisting in the lair seemed illogical.

‘Well, it is possible. Since not all chapters have hidden pieces...’

He could just check later with the ‘Treasure Hunter’ skill since he now had ‘Star of the Nameless’.

‘But wouldn’t it be really difficult alone... I think this time I really do need the help of others after the Red Dragon is defeated. I think majority of the hunters...’

While Sungjin was preoccupied with his plans, the Operator announced the arrival of the other hunters.

[Synchronizing Hunters]

Nine hunters began to appear around Sungjin. The titles and the gears of the hunters were extravagant by this point since they were wearing the best titles they had obtained during the process of overcoming adversity.

The gear was also purchased and sold via the Auction House, allowing them to match their gears more effectively to their style of combat. To the point where they were no longer any different from Sungjin at first glance.

But because of that, it could prove to be a problem. Because everyone was strong, they could be unwilling to listen to others.

Despite the need for cooperation, their belief that 'I am great' would close their minds and hearts to the words of others. And because there were now 10 individuals, it would be difficult to rally them under one banner.

The boss was one thing, but the true difficulty of this raid lay in effectively working as a team.

The previous final 10 were annihilated for the same reason.'

The chance of a troll appearing was higher than ever before.

Sungjin prepared to use ‘Jeremiah’s Eye’

‘...I’ll preemptively check for anyone having strange thoughts.’

Meanwhile, someone said

“Everyone has seen the information sheet right? Let’s split up according to roles and discuss our strategy.”

The 10 hunters split up by roles and began to discuss among themselves.

“The tanks are us two for this round. We could take turns aggroing the Red Dragon. Is anyone here able to cast recovery Magic?”

Sungjin was able to use healing magic, but he stayed quiet. If he were to cast spells, he would be able to do it better than anyone else, but pigeonholing him to a healer role was a waste of his abilities.

Not to mention he didn’t look anything like a healer while carrying three swords.

“Melee DPS please gather here.”

The ‘Barbarian’ wielding a giant Halberd was gathering people. Sungjin went to join them. A total of four hunters were gathered.

The 'Barbarian' addressed the group.

“You should be aware from the information sheet, that the dragon is able to use claws and breath attack from the front, and his tail from the back. We should split up and attack the dragon from the sides. Since being clumped up into one group is a bad idea, splitting up into teams of two will probably be better.”

“How do we decide on the grouping?”

“Well everyone present should have roughly the same level of skill... so wouldn't it be okay no matter how we split up? Let's just group up the way we are standing right now.

The 'Barbarian' used his giant Halberd to divide Sungjin and himself away from the other two. So Sungjin was put into the Right flank attack group along with the Barbarian.

In truth, there was a large difference in skill level...the other groups were making plans as well. The most obvious was

“For archers, please try to be wary of the Dragon's front. I'll warn you as soon as I think the breath attack is coming, so please dodge it.”

It was a tall and skinny black man with the title of 'Immortal'. He was taking on the leadership role with his loud voice.

He looked just like the black sidekick from Ironman as he

passionately gave instructions to the others.

“Others as well. I will shout out warnings so pay attention to my signals.”

Sungjin watched him with interest. This gathering of hunters was now considered the cream of the crop; being able to assume the role of the leader in such an environment meant that he was gifted as a leader.

“Magicians please come here for a moment. What are your school of magics?”

“I use Red and Black Magic.”

“I use Green and White Magic.”

“It’s great that your classes don’t overlap.”

After discussing with the magicians, he addressed the four melee DPS.

“How did you divide the left and right flank attackers?”

Barbarian indicated Sungjin and himself and said, “We are the Right flank.”

And pointed towards the other two.

“They are the left.”

The ‘Immortal’ glanced over the four men. Then his gaze fell on Sungjin and he froze.

“Eh...?”

He stared at Sungjin for 3 seconds. Sungjin also stared back.

‘Have we met before?’

He had difficulty remembering faces of foreigners. He tried to compare faces of other black men he met with the ‘Immortal’s’ face. But he couldn’t quite grasp it. It was someone he had never met before.

But then he said

“Master Hunter... Master Hunter Kei?”

‘Hmm?’

Sungjin was shocked.

‘How did he know my name?’

Kei was his alias, but very few people were told thus far. The ‘Immortal’ came forward to shake his hand enthusiastically. He looked even more like the black movie star from Ironman.

‘What’s going on? There’s no way I can’t recall anyone that looks like this.’

While he was thinking so, the man continued to say

“I wanted to meet you at least once, Master Hunter Kei.”

Sungjin asked him

“...how did you know my name?”

“I have heard of you. A man on a completely different level from anyone else. Someone skilled enough to clear a chapter alone.”

His words brought the attention of the other eight hunters onto him.

“Master Hunter Kei, that is you right?”

Sungjin didn’t respond. He was not in a position where he could deny it. But he decided to ask once more

“How did you come to know my name?”

“A man you saved told me.”

“Who?”

“Hiroaki”

‘...ah’

Sungjin realized what had happened. The one spreading rumors about him was the ‘Elite Samurai’ he had met in the 3rd chapter. Sungjin asked him

“When did you meet him?”

“Dark Elven City... so Chapter 8.”

He had survived.

“He was incredibly strong so I praised his skill, saying I’ve never met anyone so good with the sword... but he said there was a man he couldn’t hope to match... I asked him for the name and he gave your name. Master Hunter. Master Hunter Kei was the man.”

‘...I see...’

He had thought something like this might eventually happen later on but this was faster than he expected. Everyone was focused on the two men's conversation.

He didn't typically like having the attention focused on him, but this was the moment when he thought it would be the perfect opportunity to utilize 'Jeremiah's Eye'. There was no timing as good as when everyone's attention was on him to read their thoughts.

Sungjin touched the earring on his left ear as he gave a half-hearted reply.

"Well, he's such an enthusiastic child... he must have exaggerated the truth."

He could hear the inner thoughts of the 9 other hunters.

'Master Hunter... I didn't think it was an ordinary Title... as I thought...'

'That Helm... isn't that the head from the vampire castle's hidden boss... yeah, it's the head of the secret boss! Did he kill him? I couldn't even touch him...'

'He has a ring on almost every finger. Where did he get all of them?'

'Three swords... the worn out one looks terrible... but the other

two are without a doubt of the legendary class.'

'He's probably only a little stronger than others... it's unreasonable to believe he is able to beat chapters alone.'

'Lucky. It looked like this raid was going to be dangerous, having someone strong is really reassuring.'

'Was he really someone that strong? I guess I'll find out... since he's going to be on the right flank with me.'

'Where did he get that? How many hidden bosses did he defeat?'

'He has a similar build to Hiro... is he really that strong?'

There was a problem. Because he heard all nine voices at once, he was unable to tell whose voice belonged to whom or properly recall what was said. The only ones he remembered in detail was that of the 'Barbarian' and the 'Immortal' who still grasped his hands.

'If I want to listen to nine people's thoughts at once.... It's going to require a hell of a concentration...'

Sungjin thought as he addressed the nine others.

"Even if I am strong, it doesn't change the fact that we will need to cooperate on this round. Please trust one another and let us work together."

He heard voices once again.

‘Ah... he’s strong and a good human being. A great man.’

‘Trust? What empty words. How can I trust strangers? There are trolls everywhere.’

‘Immortal and... two dependable teammates. I guess this raid will go smoothly.’

Among the voices, one stood out to Sungjin.

‘I’ll cooperate for now. At least until... but if I monopolize 10 people’s worth of contribution... how much would that be?’

Sungjin focused on the voice. A rough voice. But he didn’t know who the owner of the voice was yet.

The only two voices he knew for sure was the ‘Immortal’ and the ‘Barbarian’. Sungjin continued to speak.

“If we work together we will be able to finish this raid without a single casualty.”

‘Hmph. I don’t know how this raid is going to go... but if only two or three remain... I’ll make my move then.’

He was a troll without a doubt. He was looking for an opportunity to strike. Sungjin paid a close attention to his voice.

‘Killing the dragon is one thing... if I wait for a chance while avoiding harm, an opportunity will...’

That was as far as he heard. The ‘Jeremiah’s Eye’ must have run out of time. The Immortal said

“Yes, just as you said, we will all get out of this alive if we all work together.”

He put his hand out among others and said

“Let’s do a cheer before we begin.”

The others came forward and placed their hands on top of his. Sungjin participated as well.

“Let’s win, go team!”

He shouted raising his arms.

“Go team!”

Sungjin raised his hands but didn’t shout along, choosing to

concentrate on his hearing.

“Go team!”

Among the voices, he heard a familiar rough vocal from before

Chapter 096 – Red Dragon's Lair (2)

“Here it comes! Careful!”

The ‘Immortal’ shouted while covering his body with the shield. A magma golem came charging towards them from the distance while letting out immense heat, stomping loudly. The hunters tensed up at its sight.

This magma golem was designed to be fought in a group of ten; it was much stronger than normal mobs of most other raids. To compare it to other chapters, it was nearly as strong as the main raid bosses of the other chapters, or perhaps just a little bit weaker.

Taking it lightly for being a normal mob could lead to instant death. And if anyone were to die, it would make the later fight against the Red Dragon more difficult.

‘Woosh’

The Golem swung both of its arms made of Lava.

The two tanks of the team, ‘Immortal’ and ‘Iron Wall’ each stopped an arm but were pushed back with every strike, even being sent flying a short distance.

Meanwhile, the other eight hunters launched their attacks, clubbing and stabbing.

“Ice Lance!”

Some fired spells

‘Ssst sst’

Others fired bolts and arrows. But everyone had to be careful. Being hit by stray droplets of magma would lead to serious burns.

“Ahh!”

The barbarian waved his hands as he backed off from the front. The Magician in the back quickly shouted

“Frozen wall, to me! Ice Shield!”

He protected the Barbarian with an ice barrier. The Barbarian’s glove was on fire. A droplet of magma must have landed on him while swinging his spear.

He quickly removed his gloves, but it was after he had sustained a severe burn. Seeing his injury, everyone else began to move more cautiously.

But one of the key strength of the magma golem was that it had an enormous health pool. Despite ten hunters endlessly smashing against the Obsidian exterior of the golem, it could still fight on.

If they didn't have a swordsman like Sungjin 'who exceeded common sense' that is.

While the other hunters were focused on the golem's front, Sungjin slid between its legs and went to the other side

“Binding Frost! Frostbite!”

He fired the chilling air from his hands. Because of the immense heat of the magma, it was difficult to freeze it. It did slow it down slightly and successfully reduced the amount of magma that splashed back.

After casting the spell, Sungjin charged towards the golem with the newly upgraded Moon Specter and the Blood Vengeance. But then the magma golem used its left arm to swing towards Sungjin.

A Magma Golem does not have front or the back; such logic only worked with humans who had limited joints. The magma golem was able to attack Sungjin without difficulty. Sungjin blocked the arm with the Blood Vengeance on his left hand.

‘Clang!’

And used the Moon Specter on his right to cut the arm. Then

“Boom!”

The arm of the golem which withstood the attack of others sliced off without much difficulty and fell to the ground. The other hunters exclaimed at the sight.

“Wow...”

The golem looked impervious to all the attacks until now, but Sungjin was able to sever a large portion of its body with a single strike. Truth be told, even Sungjin was shocked.

Sungjin looked at the Moon Specter which had upgraded to a ‘Unique Legendary’ Tier weapon.

‘S...So sharp...’

Last time he faced the Magma Golem, he had used the Blood Vengeance. But in that time, he had to cut the same spot again and again until he could deal a bit of damage.

‘As I thought... just one tier makes so much difference...’

Sungjin thought as he began to cut apart the Magma golem. Meanwhile, the other hunters became emboldened and joined in the attack. Soon the Magma golem collapsed on the spot.

“Whew...”

Everyone let out a sigh of relief.

“Let’s take a quick break before we move on.”

Everyone who had taken damage including the tanks sat down to take a drink of their potions. Meanwhile, an Asian man came up to Sungjin. His title was ‘Blue Magician’.

It was the same title Sungjin owned. From the earlier fight,

“I noticed you used the spell Frostbite... you also have high magic power. Excuse me but... how much is your magic power right now?”

Sungjin didn’t really want to answer, but he decided to make a half-hearted reply anyway.

“Well, about five thousand? That should be about right.”

He couldn’t afford to act like a loner in this raid.

“Ohh, amazing. You have strong physical stats but a high magic power as well.”

Sungjin focused on his voice rather than his words. This man had an unmasculine soft and high pitched voice. It was very different from the low and raspy voice of the troll.

“Ahh yeah well...”

Sungjin replied absentmindedly as he checked the other hunters. Everyone was silently recuperating, no one spoke.

‘I need to find out who the hidden troll is... So I can make preparations ahead of time.’

Sungjin wanted to leave the ‘Blue Magician’ behind and have a conversation with the others. The first person he spoke to was the ‘Royal Ranger’, an archer.

He was a red headed Caucasian, but his skin was clammy and unshaven, giving him an ill look.

‘Do not judge a book by its cover’ he knew, but his appearance bothered him regardless. Sungjin approached him and asked

“Hey, are you alright?”

He replied

“Ah, Master Hunter.”

It was a thick tone, but a clear one. It was not the rough tone of voice he had heard before. And he was polite.

“I am fine. Thank you for your concern.”

He was then approached by the black middle aged axe-wielding ‘Destroyer’ who asked

“Hey, what is that sword made out of? What are its specs? How did you cut off the golem’s arm in one strike?”

He pointed at the Blood Vengeance instead of the Moon Specter. Blood Vengeance was far neater and beautiful in appearance.

And he must have thought that it must have been the Blood Vengeance which cut off the arm instead of the Moon Specter. Sungjin picked up the Blood Vengeance and said

“Well... Legendary class. Bought from the Market.”

“Oh really? How amazing.”

A low tone. But far lower than anyone else. He had a low pitch even among men.

‘So he’s not it.’

Sungjin wanted to speak to two more hunters, but the ‘Immortal’ announced

“Okay, let’s continue. As you might have read, the chapter has a maze, so it is possible for us to run out of time before we even get

to the dragon and die then and there.”

Everyone prepared to leave, standing up and picking up their equipment. Sungjin was forced to stop searching for the ‘Troll’s voice’. But

“Kaa~ phew”

Someone spat phlegm from behind. A white man who had been smoking all this time, the ‘Friar’.

He was a healer who mainly used white magic, and had been smoking at every opportunity since the raid began (Sungjin didn’t smoke, but there was a merchant who sold cigarettes in the market. Cigarettes were not considered a combat related item, so it was provided for free).

Sungjin carefully observed him. He had thought that smoking might have something to do with the roughness of the voice he had heard earlier. But he answered back politely.

“Master Hunter, right? Are we going?”

“Ah... yes.”

Sungjin nodded

‘Did I get the wrong person?’

But then he added

“This raid is proving to be difficult, as expected. We are going to have to... cough... “

When he coughed, his voice was identical to what he had heard earlier.

‘If I monopolize 10 people’s worth of contribution... how much would that be?’

Rough voice full of phlegm.

‘It was this guy after all.’

Despite thinking so, Sungjin said to him

“I will be giving it my best, Sir Frior. I look forward to your support.”

“Of... of course.”

The guy was pretending to be upstanding. Except for his smoking, he looked very clean and presentable with cleanly shaved beard and short cut hair.

‘I guess the bad guys have to keep up appearances...’

Sungjin thought as he continued to glance at him. He was pretending to be a White Mage healer, but without a doubt, he had spells from other classes as well.

Actually, trolling while pretending to be a Healer is extremely advantageous. It is easy to earn the trust of teammates while healing, it does not reveal any aggression, and it allows one to stand in the back while being protected by everyone else, which improves chances of survival.

‘So, he would pretend like this till the end and suddenly strike when one or two people die.’

If this was the case, then an incredibly dangerous situation could occur. If he pretended to be preoccupied when a heal was needed, he could freely manipulate the number of survivors in a party.

Landing a spell or an Arrow on an ally by ‘accident’ would have you flagged as a troll by the Operator, but a Healer not healing being flagged as a troll is highly unlikely.

Sungjin stared at him as he thought

‘Wow... he is smarter than I thought. What should I do?’

He couldn’t out him as an undercover troll. The only reason why Sungjin found out was by reading his mind. There was no evidence

to present to the others.

And at this point, everybody was aware of the 10% penalty for trolling, so unless they were like Franz and were deeply righteous, they would not attack anyone unless they were already flagged as a troll first. Even if Sungjin declared

‘This guy is a troll’

The only thing he will hear back is

‘And the evidence?’

‘So, what the hell do you want us to do? Become a troll first?’

And etcetera.

‘Well my hands are tied’

He had no choice but to continue for now. At least until the raid boss, ‘Red Dragon’ was killed.

‘Well if close to 10 Hunters survive he probably won’t try to commit trolling alone.’

Sungjin decided to focus on defeating the Red Dragons first. This raid was 2 hours and a half hours long. He had to complete the raid

as soon as possible in order to go hunt trolls in other raids.

But the two tanks in the front stopped walking. The ‘Immortal’ looked behind and said

“It is a fork in the road. What should we do?”

Sungjin tilted his head to look ahead. The pass split into two. The only thing visible inside of the dark caves was the red hot lava lazily running downhill. Sungjin stared at the lava as he thought

‘Where was the boss again?’

The Dragon’s Lair was a maze leading from Cavern to Cavern, and within a large cavity in one of those Caverns lay the sleeping Red Dragon Khal Gal.

The problem was that Sungjin didn’t really remember the path. The first time he had come here, Sungjin had been too preoccupied with survival to worry about remembering exactly what path they had taken.

And he had never thought that he would ever return to the Dragon’s Lair again.

‘Goodness... if we get lost here, I won’t have time to go hunting for trolls...’

But then the Barbarian stepped forward and said

“Our priority is killing the red dragon first, right? Since we can increase our contribution points after the fact.”

“Of course”

“That’s right”

“I have the ‘guide’ title. The title can guide us to the boss.”

‘Oh yeah, that’s right’

There was definitely something like that. Henrik from the Cemetery had obtained the same title. The Barbarian glanced at everyone present and said

“Then I will use it right away. Operator, I will use the ‘Guide’s’ special effect. Please show us the way to the boss.”

The cave to the right became blue. The Barbarian pointed towards that cave and said

“It must be that way”

The hunters headed towards the Direction he pointed out. Sungjin followed suit.

‘It sure is nice to have more people sometimes.’

Chapter 097 – Red Dragon's Lair (3)

“Krragh!”

Flames were shot out from the hellhound's maw. The hunters split up to get out of the way and regrouped once the flames had passed.

The Immortal standing in front attacked the beast's head with his blunt weapon.

“Whine”

The hunters rushed forward to attack the hound as well, and it was soon defeated. The hunters readied themselves to continue to fight.

There were two additional hellhounds. But the hounds further ahead already had their heads separated from their bodies. Master Hunter Kei swung his swords to remove the blood from the blades as he said

“I suppose there are no more enemies in this area.”

The Immortal looked back to the others and asked

“Anyone in need of a break?”

No one spoke up.

“Let us continue then.”

There was another fork in the road further ahead. The Barbarian stepped forward once more. The Operator’s cube indicated the left path. But, the blue color was much more intense than the first time.

“This time it is to the left. Since the color is becoming more intense, we must be getting close.”

“I see. Let’s not get careless everyone. Ok, let’s go.”

The Immortal once again rallied the party and led the way. Sungjin walked with the others, standing close to the center of the formation. The Hunters walked down the path until they reached an area where the lava fell like a waterfall and gathered into a pool.

It was like a hell’s version of an onsen, where finding a devil enjoying a lava bath wouldn’t feel out of place. And seeing this area triggered a faint memory.

‘I’ve seen this before... we must be close.’

Then the Immortal suddenly stopped.

“A person?”

A silhouette of a person could be seen in the distance. While the hunters were hesitating, Sungjin remembered and shouted

“No! That’s...!”

But a spell came flying their way already.

“Eternal Flames of Hell! Inferno!”

The fire split into several strands and came flying towards the Hunters. The Hunters were able to get out of the way and dodge the spell due to having been fired from a distance, but this is what the enemy was hoping for. He then

“Burning flames, protect me! Fire Shield!”

He covered his entire body with fire and leapt up over 10 meters into the air while gripping his spear, towards the backline of the hunter’s formation.

While the hunters were staring up at him with open mouths, the enemy targetted the ‘Blue Magician’ standing in the back. Once the ‘Blue Magician’ realized that he was the target, he quickly chanted

“Ice Shield!”

He tried to protect himself with magic, but the Dragon

Demihuman easily broke through the barrier with his spear and stabbed the mage through his shoulder.

“Ahh!”

“Bastard!”

The nearby hunters swung their weapon towards the enemy, but the spirit fires orbiting the Demihuman targeted the attackers.

“W...what?”

The hunters all backed off. Meanwhile, the Dragon Demihuman aimed for the Mage’s neck as he swung his weapon. The one to block the attack was none other than Sungjin. Before the demihuman could stab

“Pa!”

Sungjin fired the Blood Vengeance out of his hands and had it strike the tip of the spear. When his attack was interrupted, the ranged hunters fired arrows and bolts towards the enemy. The Demihuman jumped high into the air to dodge the attacks and chanted a spell.

“Incinerate everything in your path! Fireball!”

There was no way to dodge the Fireball’s explosion. Even if it

doesn't cause fatalities, it would delay the raid. Sungjin had Besgoro chant

“Spell-devouring magic field, Anti Magic Shield”

To protect the hunters as he

“Haa!”

Retrieved the Blood Vengeance.

‘Boom!’

The fireball landed on the magic shield. But there was no additional damage. Once Sungjin verified the situation, he readied his two swords and charged towards the Dragon Demihuman.

The Dragon Demihuman was a master of both spells and spears.

‘Clang clack!’

The enemy spun his spear rapidly to face off against Sungjin's swords. But what he couldn't predict was that neither of Sungjin's swords was ordinary.

Sungjin's swords were able to cut off the thick arm of the Magma Golem like a hot knife through butter. The spear was shortened

with each touch of his blade.

The enemy panicked due to losing his ability to melee and prepared to run, but Sungjin was not someone who would him escape.

“Snake Eye”

The Basilisk’s eye on the necklace opened. The Dragon Demihuman briefly paused and Sungjin used the Moon Specter to behead him.

“Whoa...”

The hunters standing behind Sungjin stared at him. Most of them had their jaws hanging open. Few even gave an applause. Sungjin felt bashful with so much attention and gestured as he suggested

“Then let us continue.”

The Immortal closed his mouth and nodded.

“S...sure.”

The Hunters began to move once more. Meanwhile, the others kept on glancing towards Sungjin. He was the center of attention again.

The ‘Friar’ was also staring at him. Sungjin remembered about his earring ‘Trite’ and thought

‘The cooldown was 10 minutes, right? I think about 10 minutes have passed by now...’

Sungjin intentionally started a conversation with ‘Friar’.

“Hey, hand me a cigarette.”

“Ah, sure.”

The Friar handed over a cigarette without complaint. Sungjin put it in his mouth and asked

“Lighter too.”

The Friar lit a match and brought it to Sungjin’s cigarette as he asked

“Do you smoke as well?”

Sungjin touched his earring as he answered

“Yeah, well I quit though.”

Sungjin pretended to smoke as he peeked into the other's thoughts. He could hear the 'Friar's' voice first.

'This guy... He's too strong! He even has 'Anti magic Shield'... even though the enemy's fireball was incredibly large... I don't think my spells would work on him...'

He could hear other people's thoughts as well.

'Master Hunter Kei... the rumors were true.'

'Hiro was right... he's twice... no even stronger than that. That man is incredibly powerful.'

But the most important thoughts to hear was that of the 'Friar'. Sungjin focused his attention on the roughest voice.

'I don't think it's possible to pull off any stunts as long as he lives. Or... maybe if he was to troll... yeah, how else would he have gotten that strong? Should I quietly propose an alliance?'

Sungjin discarded his cigarette as he listened to the voice.

'Alliance... I could use that.'

The path suddenly grew spacious. It was originally too narrow for more than 3 or 4 hunters to walk side by side, but now it was wide enough for 7 hunters to walk together.

In other words, they were almost at the cavity the Dragon lived in. Soon the width of the path increased once more. Sungjin suddenly recalled.

‘That’s right... to the left here...’

The Immortal who was walking ahead turned left and

“Gasp!”

He made a sound and stopped.

‘What is it?’

The hunters stepped forward out of curiosity and froze up likewise. Sungjin leaned over to peek at the boss like the others.

‘Just as I remembered... gigantic.’

There was a colossal cavity ahead. And within slept the coiled Red Dragon. The head itself was double the height of two adult men. The body was roughly the size of a 5~6 floor tall building.

The claws on its hands were longer than most swords, and the fangs were longer than most spears. Its tail was easily over 10 meters long.

It was the second time, but the dragon was an intimidating enemy to face. The Hunters all froze in place like dolls.

Even they who had overcome trials and tribulations would feel a primal fear against such a creature. The Immortal who acted as the party leader said to the hunters

“W...well then. Let’s prepare for the battle first.”

He said and walked back towards the team. The hunters restocked the potions on their belts and checked their mana levels as they made their final preparations against the boss. The preparation was completed in a sincere atmosphere.

Seeing the dragon had forced them to think ‘this might be my last fight’. Sungjin was also preparing himself; how should he fight the boss.

‘What should I use?’

There were many things at Sungjin’s disposal, but considering the cooldown times, the ones he could use only once per raid were as follows: Romance of the Three Kingdom’s Seance, Soldamyr and upgraded Cain’s summon.

‘I should try to save them for later but...’

The problem was the hidden boss. He didn't know if there was a hidden boss on the map, but the thought that there was a hidden boss stronger than the Red Dragon made it necessary for Sungjin to hold onto his best tools.

It was difficult to imagine just how much stronger the hidden boss could possibly be if the raid boss was already at the level of an adult Red Dragon. But if he went too far in trying to preserve his strength, it could make it difficult to defeat the Red Dragon as well.

His actions could potentially bring harm to others. If so, it would make facing the hidden boss even more difficult. If the number of hunters left alive drops below 10, it could even lead to several hunters refusing to participate in taking on the hidden boss.

It was true in the past, when even one person was lost in 5 man teams the party would completely give up attempting the hidden bosses, since it was highly probable that the party would get wiped out.

‘Avoid using it as much as possible... but do not hesitate if I think the hunters are about to die. I don't think there is a problem with completion itself... but if even one person were to die, I probably won't even be able to propose taking on the Hidden boss.

Sungjin placed Soldamyr's lamp, Gourmet's monocle, and Cain's Figurine on his belt.

And finally, he took off the Basilisk's eye and hung the ‘Yanhurat’ around his neck.

‘... I really don’t think this guy is something I should be using but...’

He couldn’t be too careful. Of course, being forced to use it would indicate that the party had been effectively wiped out. Sungjin looked down at his belt and thought

‘If need be, I’ll use one or two... no, even if I have to use all three, I’ll keep all the hunters alive. Only then will I be able to propose fighting the hidden boss.’

He put away the Blood Vengeance and equipped the Artemio instead. The Dragon used powerful spells. Once he was done preparing, Sungjin glanced at the ‘Friar’. He was busily smoking away looking grim.

‘I guess the backstabber is feeling nervous.’

Even for a healer who was protected by the rest of the team, it wasn’t like a Dragon’s breath had eyes and was aimed towards a specific person. He would have to give it his best this time around.

Anyone could tell that the Red Dragon was not an opponent they could hope to defeat by doing ‘the bare minimum’. And the Friar was afraid of Sungjin. As long as Sungjin breathed, he would be afraid to commit to troll activities.

‘I’ll just assume he’s with us for now.’

Sungjin finished getting ready. The Immortal asked with a shaken voice

“Everyone ready?”

They all gave a stiff nod. He led the way, and the hunters followed behind. A sudden turn to the left.

The hunters stiffened up at the sight of the great Red Dragon, but they couldn't back out now. Turning around would only lower morale. The Immortal said

“Let's do it.”

The hunters had grim expressions on their faces as they began to charge towards the dragon. The sleeping dragon's nose twitched, and the Red Dragon muttered

“Hmm... smell of meat...”

His eyes opened up suddenly.

“Human Meat... How appetizing!”

The Operator gave an announcement.



[Warning! Boss Monster]

[Red Dragon Khal Gal has appeared!]

Chapter 098 – Red Dragon's Lair (4)

The awakened Khal Gal slowly sat up. Once it opened its wings, it was roughly twice as large as when it was lying down.

The hunters were thoroughly intimidated by the sight, but they couldn't slow down their pace. There was no way out now. If they didn't kill it, they would die.

The Immortal who stood at the vanguard lifted up his hammer and shouted

“God's Blessing!”

A bright light enveloped the man.

“Fireflies... how fun!”

Khal Gal showed interest in the light for now. Meanwhile, the hunters split up into groups as they had planned earlier.

The two tanks stood directly in front of the Dragon, and the melee DPS ran to the either side with Sungjin and the Barbarian to the right. The archers and the mages stayed behind in the back. The battle had begun for real.

Khal Gal used his right hands to strike the tanks who were in the front.

‘Woosh’

The Immortal who was closer to the attack than the ‘Ironwall’ turned to block it. He then intentionally dashed forward to dodge the sharp claws.

But he couldn’t dodge the log-like arms. He had his shield at the ready, but the moment he was hit, the light of protection dissipated and he flew away.

Unbelievable power.

The Ironwall ran forward and swung his axe towards the Dragon’s stomach. Still, he was unable to hurt the dragon through its scales which were harder than steel.

‘Tss tss tsst!’

His axe did no more than leaving a few scratch marks on the surface of the scales.

“Annoying little flies, how ticklish”

Khal Gal used his left hand to swat the Ironwall down to the ground. The Ironwall picked up his shield to defend against it, but his back bent half way back due to the attack which carried the Dragon’s body weight.

“Ahhh!”

Khal Gal opened his mouth. He had aimed to devour the immobilized hunter, but

‘Ping!’

‘Pa pa pa!’

Bolts and arrows flew towards his open mouth. On noticing the incoming strikes, the dragon quickly closed his mouth. The bolts and arrows merely bounced off the dragon’s snout, but it had saved the Ironwall for now.

Meanwhile

“Ice Shield”

The ‘Blue Magician’ provided him with a shield

“Heal”

And the Friar healed the Ironwall’s injuries. The Immortal who had been knocked away was back into the fray. Sungjin who had run towards the side was looking at them nervously.

He remembered that in the previous round, all the tanks had died and only the three DPS had survived to finish the chapter. But now, if he were to fight using his full strength, he could disrupt his team's plan.

Something like a tank keeping the mob's aggro and attention on him was only possible when the hunters had similar levels of strength. The dragon was no fool. If everyone was doing 1 damage, and someone suddenly dealt 5 damage, he would naturally focus his attention on the one doing the most.

Sungjin did follow the tank's strategy of going to the right, but he intentionally stood as close to the tanks as he could, next to Khal Gal's left arm.

‘Since... I might have to...’

Sungjin swung his swords into the Red Dragon's side. But his swords made an entirely different kind of sound.

‘Pazzzzt’

Artemio knocked away several scales before coming to a stop,

‘Paaa’

And the Moon Specter cut deep into the body of the dragon. And then

“Kraghh!”

The Red Dragon Khal Gal let out a cry of agony. That much was fine. But the dragon immediately turned towards Sungjin to the surprise of everyone else.

The Tanks were okay, but the melee DPS standing to the left of the Dragon were hit with the full force of the tail

“Aack!”

They were flung off into the distance and were embedded into the ground. One of them collapsed where he landed. But the most shocked was the halberd-wielding Barbarian next to him.

He froze in his place when he saw the Dragon glare in his direction.

‘So it has come to this...’

Sungjin decided to draw its attention to himself. The Khal Gal shouted in rage when he saw Sungjin

“You dare injure my body!”

It swung its right arm towards Sungjin. Sungjin jumped up high to dodge it, but the dragon’s wrathful strike did not end there. It

breathed in.

‘Breath?’

Sungjin carefully watched its mouth. Taking a breath attack head on would be dangerous even for him. But he then heard the guardian spirit of Moon Specter say

‘Master, please mentally prepare for his shout,’

‘Huh?’

Sungjin didn’t even have time to respond. The Dragon who looked like he was about to launch a breath attack suddenly

“I WILL KILL YOUUUUUU!”

Let out an ear-splitting bellow. All the other hunters became fear stricken due to the earth-shaking roar. Sungjin was also affected, but he was able to regain focus with an unnatural recovery speed.

The Operator gave an announcement.

[Iron will used. Remaining count: 0]

The Barbarian began to shout

“I wanna live! I want to live!”

He began sprinting towards the cavern wall. Sungjin refocused his attention and swung his two swords towards the Dragon’s throat.

“Kragh!!”

The Dragon took a step back, shouting in pain as an X shaped cut was made in his neck. Sungjin wanted to run in for additional strikes, but Khal Gal began swinging his hands wildly, so Sungjin had to back off and wait for an opportunity.

But the dragon did not stop there. He unfurled his wings and began to fly away.

“What the fuck”

The tanks who recovered faster than the others tried to run up to him, but they were unable to get close due to the immense gust of wind kicked up by the wings. The bolts and arrows were likewise useless.

After flapping his wings, the dragon took to the air. Khal gal began to fly around the spacious cavern. The hunters all shouted

“Ice bolt”

“Wind cutter”

“Holy Missile”

Firing spells

‘Shh shh shht’

‘Pew~’

And launching bolts and arrows from a distance. Sungjin also

“Murderous thunder, Jump from foe to foe!”

“Murderous thunder, Jump from foe to foe!”

“Chain lightning!”

“Chain lightning!”

Used Besgoro to launch two lightning spells at the enemy. The dragon wriggled and cried out in pain when the spells landed upon the dragon. It must have done some damage.

Sungjin was about to chant another spell when

‘Master, dragon’s breath is coming.’

Moon Specter gave another warning.

Sungjin focused his attention on the Dragon. A large amount of steam was forming at his snout.

‘That one is real’

Sungjin shouted loud enough for all the hunters to hear

“Breath!”

The hunters were surprised to hear his words and focused on the dragon’s mouth as well. Then the Dragon began to grimace. Once the hunters saw that, they instinctively escaped the area the dragon was pointing his mouth to.

“Fwoooooooooosh”

An incredible amount of fire came spewing forth.

Khal Gal’s breath divided the field into two halves. The ground continued to burn intensely as if it was made of oil.

The interior of the cave heated up rapidly and became as bright as day. But because of that, it became difficult to tell what was what. It became impossible to tell if anyone was hit by the breath or what was going on on the other side. No one was screaming, but if anyone was hit by that breath attack, they would have melted before they even had a chance to scream.

Khal Gal chanted a spell.

“Incinerate everything in your path”

Two large balls of fire appeared in its hands. The size of the flames was massive. Soldamyr had once said that ‘Magic originated from Dragons.’

And the five colors of magic were taken from the five colors of dragons, and that their color corresponds with the magic that they use. In other words, this dragon was the source of Red magic. The effect of any red magic that the dragon would choose to use would be incredibly powerful.

Sungjin watched the ball of fire grow larger and larger in Khal Gal’s hands and thought to himself.

‘What should I do?’

Sungjin decided to use Artemio to reflect the spell rather than nullify with the anti magic shield. Attacking the Dragon while it is in the air would be difficult.

To finish it off, he would need to force it back down to the ground.

“Magic reflect.”

Artemio began to glow a bright purple.

“Fireball”

The giant ball of flames came flying from the dragon. Sungjin watched the path of the spell and then reflected the spell towards the direction he saw the dragon flying towards.

The fireball changed directions when it came into contact with the Artemio and flew back to the dragon. Meanwhile, on the other side of the fire wall

‘Boom!’

The fireball exploded with a loud noise. Sungjin was worried for hunters on the other side.

‘... did they survive?’

But he couldn't help what he had no control over. If they died from that attack, that was as far as they were fated to go. The fireball Sungjin had reflected back flew accurately towards the

direction Sungjin had picked

Khal Gal did not change directions and continued to fly counter-clockwise. And soon, the fireball landed on one of the Dragon's wings.

“Boom!”

With the great explosion

“Kragh!”

The dragon tilted midair for a moment. The red scales did not catch on fire, but at least it seemed to have taken damage from the blast.

The dragon flapped its wing to regain balance, but he was already tilted too far. The Dragon ran into the wall and slid to the ground.

Sungjin wanted to rush towards the dragon immediately, but the wall of fire was blocking his path. It was far too strong and tall to attempt to jump through.

Sungjin tried to look beyond the flames. The hunters were huddled up behind the Ice wall the ‘Blue Magician’ had erected. They had managed to make themselves an emergency shelter to hide behind. Sungjin shouted at them.

“It’s our chance! Focus your attacks on it!”

The Hunters rushed out from behind the wall and ran towards Khal Gal. The Dragon stood up from the wall and asked for assistance.

“Your master is in danger. Help me.”

At his command,

“Grrr Woof woof!”

The sound of barking dogs could be heard from behind the Dragon.

‘This guy, after pretending to be strong...’

Sungjin remembered this part of the Dragon as well. When the Dragon felt endangered, it would request assistance from nearby monsters.

Sungjin checked the hunters on the other side of the fire. The tank Ironwall, as well as the other Hunters, were unable to snap out of it and focus on the fight. If this continued, the hunters would start dying one by one.

Not to mention that right now was the best opportunity to finish off the dragon.

‘I guess I can’t help it.’

Sungjin threw the figure of Cain into the air.

“Come out, Cain.”

A wolf taller than a man appeared. Cain saw the Red Dragon and

“Grrr”

Bared his teeth, but Sungjin pointed towards the mob of spear clad Dragon Demihumans and Hellhounds and said

“Cain, take that side.”

“Arf.”

Cain answered with a short bark, followed by a long howl.

“Awwooooooooo”

Suddenly, smoke appeared around Cain and wolves materialized with ‘poof’ sounds. It was a familiar sight of Dire and Gray Wolves.

‘Is this the effect of growth...?’

Sungjin watched for a moment before telling Cain

“I’ll leave it to you then.”

“Awoo~”

Cain replied before leading his pack towards the monsters. Sungjin looked towards the Dragon. The fire wall created by the breath attack was starting to get low.

Sungjin watched it for a bit more before he jumped in and ran across the fire, towards the injured Red Dragon.

Chapter 099 – Red Dragon's Lair (5)

Sungjin ran to the other side of the firewall created by the Breath attack. The Immortal and the other hunters were facing the Dragon, but they were in a precarious situation.

The Immortal had to take on the full brunt of Khal Gal's attack alone. He was having trouble even while working together with another tank, so it goes without saying that it wasn't so smooth sailing for him. Even a half-assed swing of Khal Gal pushed the Immortal back by more than a meter.

“Gah!”

Sungjin was afraid that the Immortal might die, so he cast a spell from afar.

“Close the wounds and erase the pain, Heal!”

Sungjin cast the heal on the Immortal as he hurried forward. Once Sungjin was standing next to the Immortal, Khal Gal shouted in anger

“You I will devour whole!”

Khal Gal's large claws came flying towards him. Although they were named 'claws', they were the same lengths as spears. Sungjin tumbled backwards to dodge out of the way and then hopped into the air.

Boulders were gouged out where the claws passed through the ground. No matter how high Sungjin's HP was, one or two direct hits would most likely prove fatal.

Sungjin put his life on the line and carefully observed the Dragon. It was then, when the Dragon swung its arm again, that Sungjin noticed liquid falling from its neck region.

‘Blood...?’

Even as he dodged to the side, he carefully observed his opponent. It was the place he had slashed the Dragon with his two swords in an X shape.

It was difficult to see due to its red scales, but the scales were missing where Sungjin had struck the Dragon earlier. It seemed to be slowly bleeding from there.

‘That's it.’

Sungjin shouted out loud

“Everyone! Concentrate your attack on his neck! You can see an X mark if you focus!”

At his instructions, the bolts and arrows, and the spells became focused on that point. Even hunters from beyond the firewall

launched attacks towards the neck.

Khal Gal became frustrated when the attacks began to be focused on his neck; he was a creature with a long neck and short arms.

He tried to cover his wound with his wings, but it was not a good solution due to one of the wings being wounded from the magical blast earlier.

The Dragon attacked out of annoyance at having to defend a weakness, but Sungjin nimbly dodged every attack. The Dragon became enraged and shouted

“Damn it! Where are my minions? I command you to help me!”

He looked over to the exit, but his minions were already halfway annihilated by Cain and his pack.

“Goodness!”

Khal Gal who had been arrogant until now finally realized that he was outnumbered and began to scream loudly.

“IT CAN’T BE!”

He began flapping his wings wildly like a chicken, running amok in the cavern. The hunters who had organized themselves into formation while attacking had to scatter to dodge its attack since

being stepped on or being swept away by the tail would be lethal. But the battle continued smoothly.

The hunters who were scattered quickly reformed back into groups after the Dragon passed, resuming the prearranged formation and continuing to launch attacks.

Khal Gal continued to take on damage to its back and wings from them. Sungjin thought

‘Everything is going smoothly’

And he charged towards the Dragon. But it was then,

‘Master, brace for Terrorizing Roar.’

Moon Specter gave a warning. The Dragon wasn’t running for the exit; it had been hiding its face as it prepared to unleash a shout attack. Sungjin quickly called out

“Careful! He’s going to shout!”

He warned the other hunters.

‘What should I do?’

If it was just a simple shout, it would be easy to withstand the

impact, but there was a subtle magical element to it. The moment the sound of the shout hit the ears, it would cause anyone to lose their mind and show their backs to the enemy.

And the number 1 priority target of the Dragon was none other than himself. If he was out of his mind with terror, the Dragon would use anything and everything in its disposal to try and kill him.

‘I was protected by the ‘Iron Will’ passive earlier, but I don’t have anything like that left...’

He then recalled something important. Sungjin checked the rings on his fingers. He could see the shape of the ‘Chimerao – Ring of Fused Beasts’. There were figures of four animals shaped into the ring. Man, Snake, Goat, and Lion.

‘Lion gave immunity to fear, right?’

Sungjin held the ring as he watched the Dragon’s mouth. Sungjin was aiming to use the active skill as soon as the Dragon cast the shout attack to launch his counter. But it was then

The Immortal walked up to Sungjin and said

“I’ll protect you from the shout. Please prepare to counter attack, Master Hunter.”

‘What?’

He didn't have time to respond. The Dragon who had been facing the wall suddenly turned as if he had finished his preparations. His snout was flared as if he was about to shout.

But the Immortal took out a bell and said

“Bell of Silence.”

“Ring”

The ring gave off a tranquil sound. and Sungjin felt a strange sensation; The feeling of stuffy ears one would get after climbing back down from a mountain.

Khal Gal opened his mouth and shouted

“I will kill you all! You damn mortals!”

But Sungjin was unable to hear anything. The Immortal tried to say something to him, but he couldn't hear him either.

It seemed as though the item he used would create a field of sound nullification. So Sungjin was unable to hear anything from the gigantic Dragon who had shouted his lungs out.

The other eight hunters, Cain and the other wolves standing a distance away, and even the hell hounds could be seen running

away as fast as their legs could carry them.

Once Sungjin understood the situation, he quickly gathered himself and ran away as fast as he could.

“Ahhhh!”

Screaming at the top of his lungs.

The Immortal was surprised.

“Careful! He’s going to shout!”

Once he had heard the warning from the Master Hunter, he had acted to protect (since Sungjin was as strong as everyone else combined) and came running towards him. He used the Bell of Silence to protect him from all sounds.

The plan had worked. Once the bell rang, he could not hear a sound despite watching the Dragon mouthing some words. But the Master Hunter still turned to run away, screaming.

The Immortal was stunned.

“What happened?”

He had used the Bell of Silence (usually used on spell casters to prevent their incantations from completing) several times until now. The effects were 'Create a small field of sound nullifications'. But now it seemed that it had no effect.

No, the item had worked. He himself had been protected by the item from the effects of the shout. He stared blankly at Sungjin who had been running away.

“Ke he he! Yes, run you little runt!”

He watched Khal Gal chase straight after the Master Hunter.

‘I don’t know what’s going on but’

The Immortal ran forward to protect him from Khal Gal, but Khal Gal paid no attention to him. The Dragon must have realized that killing Master Hunter was the top priority. So the Immortal was forced to yell

“Master Hunter!” But then he realized that the Master Hunter’s state was strange. He had switched out one of the swords; From a purple glowing Scimitar to a Katana with a Red Aura. The Immortal realized that he must have something planned.

“Die you little bug!”

Khal Gal must have not noticed the switch. He only focused on trying to catch Master Hunter who was still screaming

“AHHH!”

But Master Hunter, who had been running away, suddenly turned and hopped on top of Khal Gal’s paws, and jumped towards the Dragon.

The place he was aiming for was the X mark he had made earlier.

Sungjin stabbed both Blood Vengeance and Moon Specter into the Dragon’s neck. Thanks to the X mark he had made earlier, his wound had become like an archery target for him.

“Kaaa!”

Khal Gal who was stabbed in an open wound let out a cry like never before as he backed off. Sungjin who had successfully tricked the Dragon with his acting moved to finish him off.

But the Dragon wildly flapped his wings as he began to run away once more from him, much like a giant chicken. It was difficult to follow up and attack the Dragon while he was running amok.

Sungjin chased the dragon and continued to slice and stab at it at its tail and wings, but this wouldn’t ever amount to a fatal injury.

‘I just need... one more chance...’

The dragon was bleeding profusely from its neck. Sungjin looked for an opportunity while chasing him, but then he saw the dragon take a deep breath again.

‘What is it this time?’

Moon Specter answered the question for him.

‘Master, Please be careful of the Breath attack.’

This time it was a breath attack. Sungjin turned to the other hunters and shouted

“It’s a breath attack!”

The hunters scattered at his words. They knew how dangerous this attack was from before. Sungjin gazed back up at Khal Gal. He was flaring his nose with his mouth closed.

He really was planning on using Breath. Sungjin actually had the confidence that he had enough speed to dodge the breath attack since he could make a rough estimate of the trajectory by watching his neck.

He was just worried about Cain and the others behind him, since the Breath was something that could accidentally strike when

randomly fired.

Even grazing against the breath attack was fatal. Sungjin felt pressed to make a decision.

‘What should I do?’

But a plan of action popped into his head, and he immediately moved to act upon it. He fed Blood Vengeance his blood.

“Baptism of Blood”

Using the reddened Blood Vengeance, he first cut Khal Gal’s tail. Khal Gal was unable to scream out due to gathering the air for his breath attack and glared at Sungjin instead. Sungjin decided to taunt him.

“How far will you run, lizard”

The Red Dragon’s eyes were filled with rage. Sungjin purposefully positioned himself close to a wall and gripped the Moon Specter.

‘Phmph’

A large amount of steam was let out from the nostrils. He was about to unleash the breath attack. Seeing that, Sungjin said

“I’ll leave it to you, Moon Specter.”

And drew the blade.

“Ghastly Wail.”

“Kyaaa!”

Moon Specter’s screech filled the air at the same time Khal Gal began to unleash his attack.

The Red Dragon who had been aiming towards Sungjin raised his head in terror and his attack burnt nothing but the ceiling.

His wound was easy to see now that his gaze was up facing the ceiling. Sungjin prepared his swords and dashed towards the enemy’s neck. But it was then

Khal Gal’s eyes returned to normal, and he lowered his gaze towards Sungjin once more.

‘Master, that creature has strong resistance to Fear.’

Chapter 100 – Red Dragon's Lair (6)

Before he was teleported to the Red Dragon's Lair, Sungjin had thought while reading the information sheet.

‘Getting hit head on by the Red Dragon's Breath attack?’

He didn't even want to imagine it.

‘No matter how high the endurance... that's a one-way ticket to purgatory...’

Sungjin took a sip of the Vanilla Latte as he was arranging his thoughts. The rings which covered every single finger sparkled in the light.

Among them, the one that caught his eye the most was the newest addition, the ‘Chimerao – Ring of Fused Beasts’. A ring decorated with the image of Man, Snake, Lion, and Goat.

Each gave immunity to Fire, Poison, Fear, and Cold for 5 seconds. Sungjin played with the human figure of the ring as he thought

‘If I use this... I can survive 5 seconds in the breath.’

But he shook his head.

‘No... I shouldn't even consider that as a possibility. With or

without the items, being touched by that...’

This happened this morning.

Khal Gal regained his bearings and readjusted the breath attack back towards Sungjin.

Sungjin ran alongside the wall, but the enraged Khal Gal continued to breathe out flames after him. Sungjin waited until the attack stopped since there was a physical limit to how long the breath attack can be sustained. But along the way, Khal Gal swung his arm down, and

‘Boom’

blocked Sungjin’s path.

It was a resolute attack, one where the dragon prepared to sacrifice his own arm to take Sungjin out. Sungjin had no place to run.

A hopeless situation; Sungjin decided to try the ‘option’ he had come up with in the morning.

“Magician’s Frost”

With his command, the ‘Chimerao – Ring of Fused Beasts’ emitted a blue light. And above Sungjin came Khal Gal’s immense breath of flames.

The blinding light forced his eyes close as he was pushed against the wall due to the pressure, but he did not feel any heat.

The immunity to fire had begun. Sungjin started to count 5 seconds from that position.

‘5’

Moon Specter was worried

‘Master! Master!!’

She shouted at him

‘4’

Besgoro who had kept quiet all this time also urgently shouted

‘What are you doing Kei? If you die, I die too!’

‘3’

Once 3 seconds had passed, Sungjin regretted his decision.

‘Who cares if 1 or 2 hunters die? I shouldn’t have put my back against the wall.’

If the breath would last longer than 2 seconds, then this would be the end of his second life.

‘2’

But once he had counted 4 seconds, he no longer felt any pressure.

‘1’

Sungjin opened his eyes as he counted the last second. The usually arrogant Khal Gal was staring at him with a hint of despair. He had been firing the breath attack from before when Sungjin had used ‘Ghastly Wail’.

The attack had barely ended within the ‘Magician’s Frost’s’ 5-

second immunity. He smelled something burning, so he looked to the side to see the dragon's arm burnt black to a crisp.

He had sacrificed his own body as a last desperate measure. He had no more fight left in him.

‘He’s done for...’

Sungjin nimbly jumped on top of the Dragon's arm and ran towards the body. The Dragon turned away to try and escape, but Sungjin did not allow him to.

Sungjin who leapt from the arm to the shoulder,

“Baptism of Blood”

Activated the Blood Vengeance's ability and pierced the X-shaped wound on the chest of the Dragon.

“Kaaaah!”

Khal Gal screamed. But this was not the end. Sungjin used the Blood Vengeance as an anchor and rapidly slashed against his neck.

Meanwhile, the other Hunters began to beat, stab, and shoot the Dragon from afar. Khal Gal let out a cry of agony and struggled desperately, but to no avail.

“This can’t...”

Khal Gal lasted only a few more seconds before he collapsed, bleeding out from the first wound he had received.

Sungjin, who had spent every last bit of his strength to swing and stab Khal Gal, dropped alongside him when Khal Gal finally fell. He listened to the Operator while laying on the ground.

[Congratulations. Boss Monster]

[Red Dragon Khal Gal has been defeated!]

The announcement couldn’t be more welcome.

“Woof!”

Cain came running up to Sungjin. He must have been worried for his master’s well being. He licked Sungjin’s face which was covered in blood. On becoming slobbered, Sungjin said to Cain

“Ahh, Cain I’m fine, I’m fine.”

Meanwhile, the other nine hunters came running towards Sungjin as well. When Sungjin finally sat up, the hunters bowed towards him one by one and said

“It was... absolutely amazing, Master Hunter.”

“We survived thanks to you. If it’s you... Maybe...”

“I can’t help but respect you.”

Sungjin stood up and looked towards the ‘Friar’. He also looked astonished as the rest. He had guessed that Sungjin was strong, but Sungjin had proven to be far more powerful than he had ever imagined. Sungjin straightened himself as he said

“Good work everyone. Let’s take a break before we continue.”

Inside of Khal Gal’s Cavern, the Hunters replenished their lost HP and checked their equipment. No one had taken significant damage. All thanks to Sungjin’s extraordinary contribution to the fight.

The Hunters exchanged words with each other about Sungjin’s bloody battle with the Dragon.

“If it weren’t for Master Hunter, not all of us would be here right now. Maximum 8? 7?”

“The rumors were true. He might have been able to come all this way alone.”

Sungjin felt bashful from the praises and sat a distance away from the others, speaking to Cain.

“So, where did your comrades come from? That forest?”

“Woof.”

“I see, good work. Thanks to you taking a load off our backs, it was easier to take on the boss. Good work Cain.”

As Sungjin said that, he walked up to the chewed up corpse of a Hell Hound. He had been using MP throughout the fight and ‘Baptism of Blood’ had drained some of his HP as well.

“Lich’s Beckon”

Sungjin used the Lich’s finger to replenish his MP.

“Close the wounds and erase the pain, Heal!”

He used his own spell to heal himself. The Operator gave an announcement.

[HP is at max value.]

Sungjin asked in addition

“Elapsed time?”

[The time spent in this raid is 34 minutes 48 seconds.]

It ended earlier than he thought. The fight against the Red Dragon was one thing, but the Barbarian acting as ‘guide’ was a major contributing factor.

‘I never really gave it much importance... but goes to show that there’s no such thing as a useless title...’

But he still had to hurry. This Chapter was a maze. He had no way to know exactly where the others would be located when they commit to trolling. He may have to spend up to 20~30 minutes per jump to search for trolls.

‘I should hurry.’

Sungjin quickly returned to where the Hunters were gathered.

“If everyone is rested...”

As soon as he opened his mouth, the others turned to look. They

were all men, but they seemed to be attracted to his overwhelming strength. It was a strange feeling. The Immortal stood up and said

“Let us go search for more monsters. We should aim to increase our contribution points as high as we can.”

“Let’s do that.”

“Let’s go.”

Sungjin said to the hunters, who were getting ready to leave,

“You all know about the Hidden Pieces right? What do you think of searching for those?”

They all looked to one another. Not a single person asked

‘Hidden Piece? What’s that?’

“It’d be great, but...”

“If we find it, great, if not, oh well.”

“Dragon’s hoard... I feel like it should be worthwhile...”

And among them

“Wouldn’t the Hidden boss be incredibly difficult?”

Someone finally mentioned the Hidden boss. Sungjin said to them

“I have Treasure Hunter Title so let’s search for the Hidden Pieces with that as the base. Of course, we’ll hunt along the way... but finding treasure is even better. About the hidden boss... let’s think of that a bit later.”

Everyone nodded at his words.

“Sure.”

“Hidden Pieces are always welcome.”

Sungjin, who seemed to have gotten the group’s approval, spoke to the Cube.

“Operator, give me the Star of the Nameless.”

The Operator soon took out a star shaped pendant with a whirl design. Sungjin said to the star

“Rename.”

It was the first time Sungjin had used such a command. The Operator asked

[Which title would you like to rename to?]

“Treasure Hunter”

[You have been renamed.]

Sungjin looked up to check his title, but he didn't need to. The other Nine Hunters were staring at his title with their mouths open.

“Wait... you can change titles in the middle of the Raid?”

“What an amazing item...”

No one asked.

‘How did you get it?’

Everyone just assumed ‘he’s special’ and let it slide. Sungjin gathered the hunters and said

“The Treasure Hunter ability gives us hints about where the Hidden pieces are located. I will use the ability in a sec... but I will need the wisdom of everyone here to help me.”

Their eyes sparkled at his words. They didn't know the effects of Master Hunter title, but they had understood through intuition that Treasure Hunter ability was extremely good.

“Please listen to the hint from my Cube, and let me know if you think you understood the clue.”

Everyone nodded at his words.

‘I feel like I’ve become a teacher or something.’

Sungjin asked the Operator,

“Operator, I’ll use the Treasure Hunter Active. If there is a Hidden Piece on the map, please give me a clue.”

The Operator gave a verse at his request.

[Red Dragon of Avarice, Khal Gal]

[Slain many, in the hundreds of years of its life;]

[Taking their treasure, hoarding them in his lair.]

[The path is red, a place only he could go]

[To roll over mounds of treasures with covered wings]
[is his most cherished past time.]

Sungjin carefully listened. The important parts seemed to be as follows.

‘Red path, only he could go, covered wings’

“Red Path? But everything here is either black or red”

“Only he could go... couldn’t anyone go where that dragon can fit?”

“Covered wings... I think this is the key.”

Sungjin nodded.

“Ok, I see. So let’s find out where the hidden boss is. I don’t know if we can beat it or not but... we should be aware of where it is located first so we know how to avoid it, right?”

Everyone nodded at his suggestion.

“Yeah, Good idea.”

“At least we won’t run into him while walking down but...”

Sungjin let out a fake cough and asked the second question.

“Cough... Operator, where is the Hidden boss located?”

[She who hears, she who came]

[She has learned of the child's unruliness]

[And awoken from a long slumber to visit.]

[Be warned that above the proof of wickedness]

[Lies, also, her wrath]

It was short. But it was something quite different. Sungjin, as well as the rest of the hunters, became mute.

‘What the hell is it talking about?’

Everyone's expression seemed to say. Sungjin stroked his chin and then asked once more

“Hey Operator, can you tell me the hint again?”